

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

BEASTS AND BIRDS IN THE
LIVES OF THE EARLY
IRISH SAINTS

SISTER MARY DONATUS

A THESIS

IN ENGLISH

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PHILADELPHIA

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SUPERIORI MEAE
REVERENDAE MATRI MARIAE LOYOLA
PIGNUS UT PIETATIS, INTIMI ET CORDIS
AFFECTIONIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE *Lives* of the early Irish saints are not, for the most part, themselves early. Only a few can be dated with approximate accuracy, notably that of Columbanus by Jonas; two of Columcille, by Cuimine, and (by general ascription) Adamnán; of Brigit by Cogitosus; the works on Patrick by Tírechán and Muir-chu; with the *Life* of Fursa, probably not composed in Ireland. These are referable to the 7th century. One only is based on contemporary information given personally to the writer shortly after the saint's death, that of Columbanus by Jonas. In the great majority of cases, the student has before him lives of saints who lived in the 5th to the 7th centuries, as they were written in the 11th to the 13th centuries, perhaps in a few cases in the 10th, as for example that of Colmán Mac Luachán then written down for the first time. The 13th and 14th centuries formed a period for systematic reworking of older lives, and various recensions dating from that period have come down to us as preserved through the labors of John Colgan and his Franciscans in the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, the *Triadis Thaumaturgae*, containing the lives of Patrick, Brigit, and Columba, and the *Collectanea Sacra* of Patrick Fleming, published at Louvain.

There are three great collections of Latin Lives of the Irish saints. The first is in a MS. of the Royal Library at Brussels 7672-4, known as the *Codex Salmanticensis*, once belonging to the Irish College at Salamanca; the second, in two MSS., one marked V 3 4, in Primate Marsh's Library, Dublin (M); the other, E. 3. 11, in Trinity College Library, Dublin (T); and a third in two Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian, Rawl. B (R¹) and 505 (R²), a copy of the former. The MS. in Primate Marsh's Library (M) was used by John Colgan, who called it the *Codex Kilkenniensis*, also by Fleming, under the name of *Codex Ardma-*

chanus. There is another transcript (F) now in the Franciscan Convent in Dublin, also used by Colgan. The beginning of modern scholarly collection and criticism is found in the work of the Bollandists, beginning in the 17th century, and their great inclusive collection of the lives of the saints of all countries, the *Acta Sanctorum*.

The *Lives* of the early Irish saints form a body of most fascinating reading. They represent, naturally, the periods when they were written, and only in part, where unchanged, through tradition, the periods in which the saints they treat of lived. Historically, they are in general wildly inaccurate chronologically in their references to, or their grouping of, persons and events—entirely untrustworthy unless checked by external evidence. In point of style, they are extremely brief and bald, scarcely more than a series of anecdotes with only rare attempts at literary distinction now and again in later recensions. Their content consists in good part of “monastic miracles”, incredible marvels and portents from oral traditions of the monastic families, or transferred by writers from the lives of other saints, and with many of the stories based on stock themes. They afford only vague and fugitive glimpses of individual saints as men, the purpose of the writer being to demonstrate the sanctity and God-given powers of his subject, to establish his fame as patron and founder of his monastic foundation. Under these conditions, the *Lives*, though of inestimable value, present innumerable difficult and delicate problems to the hagiologist.

The special tasks confronting the hagiologist, however, and the keen interest and sheer delight with which the *Lives* may be read are two quite distinct things. The uncertainty of their dates and their inaccuracy do not detract from this enjoyment, and the brevity and simplicity with which the stories are told only enhance their intrinsic interest, for the *Lives* possess an individuality, a character all their own. The stories they contain, from the most ordinary happenings to the most fabulous *mirabilia*, have the ingenuousness, the unconscious directness of folk-tales, to which *genre*, indeed, many of them belong. Even the legends on stock themes, many times repeated, take on ever-

renewed interest because of differences of detail. Over and over again, one finds inimitable touches, conscious or unconscious, of the tenderness, humor, fantasia, extravaganza of the Irish temperament. Though they fall short as biography, they give a vivid picture of the arduous lives of the early Irish saints and solitaries, their wanderings and hardships, their delight in wild and lonely places, their fiery devotion to their missionary labors, their stern asceticism, their consecration to scholarship, their struggle with nature and with temporalities in the upbuilding of their monasteries and great schools under what were, in fact, pioneering conditions.

It was the charm which the legends of the early Irish saints exercised, first through secondary sources, later in the original *Lives* themselves, that led the writer to seek in them some special subject of study. A natural bent determined the subject finally chosen, as of interest in itself, as serving to illustrate the lives of these early saints in characteristic relations, and as including a wholly adequate number of legends setting forth their widely varied interest. The purpose was to build up and add contributory material to the very full and graphic picture of the social culture exemplified in the *Lives* which appears in Plummer's illuminating introductions to his several volumes. This purpose has been accomplished, the stories are gathered under appropriate rubrics, and though the greater number are necessarily given in abstract, the actual words of the original are often included in part and, in not a few instances, entire stories are given in full.

Further, a special inquiry was suggested by the present study. The love and sympathy felt towards the lower animals by the saints, forming the inspiration of so many beautiful legends, is a fact which is familiar. It seems, at least in popular understanding to center in, even to begin with, Saint Francis of Assisi. Apparently there has not been made any studied attempt to show how this love for and intimacy with animals, in particular wild animals, appears long before the "Poor Man", or further, a love of the solitudes and wilder aspects of nature in themselves and not solely as affording a means of retreat from the

world, incidental disciplinary privation, and occasion for closer communication with God. Both the love of animals and of nature are marked characteristics of the early Irish saints, greater and less. It is the intention of the writer to next make a study in this connection of the *Lives* of the Irish missionaries on the Continent, of Celtic and English saints in Britain and of the saints of Brittany, and also to trace their tradition from earlier times to see to what extent it was specially characteristic of Celtic saints and those influenced by them. Material has already been gathered for this study, but must await a future opportunity for completion.

The study which follows is based primarily on the Latin *Lives* with such Irish *Lives* as are available, namely, the various lives separately published, the *Acta Sanctorum*, the *Patrologia Latina*, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae ex Codice Salmanticensi*, *Anecdota Oxoniensis* (Lismore Lives), *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, John of Tynemouth's *Sanctilogium* (Nova Legenda Anglie, Capgrave), Charles Plummer's *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, *Miscellanea Hagiographica Hibernica*, *Bethada Náem nÉirenn*, *Silva Gadhelica* and articles in philological journals. A number of references have been drawn from Giraldus' *Topographia Hibernica*. The writer regrets not having had direct access to the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* of John Colgan. A large amount of supplementary and illustrative material was gathered from histories, annals, martyrologies, law tracts and the like, from the works of Canon John O'Hanlon, Baring Gould-Fisher, Reverend Alban Butler, Douglas Hyde, Patrick Kennedy (Harley Whitney), John Gregorson Campbell, W. Y. Evans Wentz, J. A. Macculloch, Reverend W. J. Rees, Seumas MacManus, W. G. Wood-Martin, Lady Gregory, Lady Wilde, Eugene O'Curry; the publications of the *English Text Society*, *Modern Language Association*, *Royal Irish Academy*, *Revue Celtique* and *Ériu*; the *Catholic Encyclopaedia* and the *Dictionary of Christian Biography*; besides local histories, notably those of the Reverend Geoffrey Keating and Reverend John Lanigan, personal communications, and other sources. It has proved necessary, with extreme regret, to omit this material, except in a few special instances, in the interest of limitations of space and economy.

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CHAPTER II

DOMESTIC ANIMALS

THE domestic animals which appear in the *Lives* are, in order of frequency of mention, cattle, horses, sheep, swine, goats, dogs, cats, with, curiously enough, only a few references to poultry. Here, for convenience, may be included the self-domesticated pests, mice, flies and fleas.

Many of the references are merely casual, but even these often betray elements of interest. Facts and conditions under the present heading are, in many cases, still familiar in farm-life today, yet none the less not a few striking features emerge—as for example the love and regard for and sympathy with irrational creatures (as in the secular literature, also) and the ascription of tamed creatures, serving the needs of man, of a secret insight into human affairs and occult powers that may be appealed to on occasion, such as is found so frequently in the folk-tales and folk-lore of all countries.¹

1. CATTLE

Cattle filled an important place in primitive Irish life. They afforded a chief source of subsistence through their flesh and the products of the dairy. Oxen served as draught animals and beasts of burden. Cows, especially prized as an immediate and continuous source of profit, were used as a recognized currency in payment or barter, as a preferred form of complimentary gift, and as a convenient unit of reference in estimating values or appraising wealth.

As the primitive monastic families were farming communities and apparently, in the earlier periods at least, rather pastoral than agricultural, references to cattle in the *Lives* are very

¹ See Wood-Martin, *Elder-Faiths*, 2.117f for a discussion of the belief that animals are cognizant of human affairs, are able to read one's thoughts, that it is fatal to ask them questions at peril of being struck dead.

numerous. Far the greater number have to do with cows and calves, a lesser but proportionate number with oxen, while there are no references to bulls, though bulls play so notable a part in secular literature, and though a savage beast might so readily offer opportunities for a saint's miraculous intervention such as happens so frequently in the case of mad cows, unbroken horses, and dangerous wild animals.

This abundant, though often repetitive, material divides naturally as follows: care of cows and calves; dairy products and their use; oxen as draught animals; the use of veal and beef as food; evidence as to the value placed upon cattle; and certain exceptional facts and incidents calling for special attention.

A. Cows and Calves

Under the first of these headings, especially numerous are incidents concerned with or connected with the herding of cattle on common grazing grounds near or at a distance, or on pastures jealously held as private monastic property. The same is true of other domestic animals, as will be seen below. It is very striking to note how large a number of the early saints, greater or lesser, are described as serving as herds, usually in youth. An ingenuous sentence in a French account of Saint Colmán, "*Dans son enfance, il semble qu'il ait gardé les vaches*", makes one smile a little, for the same might be said of practically every saint in the bede-roll of the Holy Island. It would seem as if service in tending cattle, sheep, goats, or swine had become a preliminary requisite to sainthood, or mark of distinction in itself, in the lives framed in honor of patron saints, following upon and emulating the glory of such great saints as Saint Patrick and Saint Brigit. Youthful saints pursue their reading and study while tending herds or flocks. As a boy, watching his parents' cattle, Ciarán of Clonmacnois also "*psalmos legebat apud sanctum Diarmatum; set ualde nobis doctrina ipsa mirabili modo facta est.*" For though Diarmat dwelt at the far eastern end of the field, and Ciarán was at the west, yet Diarmat across that great distance taught the boy-saint where he sat on his stone at his reading. "*Que petra usque*

hodie colitur posita ibi cruce Christi, que ex nomine Kyarani nominatur.”² Characteristically also, youthful saints while herding often give first evidence of their miraculous powers. Of this many examples appear in the stories which follow.

Further, certain typical motives recur repeatedly, with slight or sometimes unusual variations, which had evidently become a stock feature whether in oral tradition or as transferred from the *acta* of one saint to another, as if essential to his proper credit. The most notable example of this is the story of the calf (or, rarely, a sheep or goat) eaten by a wolf and restored miraculously to life. A famine-stricken wolf appears from the forest, and in compassion, the saint gives him one of the calves he herds. Rebuked for its loss, he restores the calf, a significant feature in some versions being that he re-clothes with flesh the bones which the wolf has picked. That this might have been an essential in the folk-tale analogues of the story appears in the version told of Ciarán of Clonmacnois,³ who bids the wolf, “Go and eat the calf and break not and eat not its bones.” So similarly it was the bones of an eaten calf that Saint Colmán “signed” to make it quick and whole. In the case of other animals, the preservation of the bones seems to be an essential or helpful element in their restoration. The cow stolen by Grac, the Rebel, though boiled in a cauldron, was carried back to Saint Moling to be brought to life.⁴ Another wholly delightful example is in a story told of Columcille. One day he was left cooking an ox for the reapers. “With them was a whilom-hero of the men of Ireland, to wit Mael-Uma, son of Baedán.” The abbot asked him what his meal had been when he was a warrior. “‘When I was a warrior I used to consume a fat ox to my full meal.’ Columcille ordered him to eat his fill. . . . He consumed the whole ox.” Baithín came and asked if the food was ready for the reapers. Columcille ordered Mael-Uma to gather the bones of the ox in one place. The saint then blessed the bones “and

² *VSH* 1.201.

³ *VSH* 1.202; *LS* 267.

⁴ *RC* 27.287 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

their own flesh was around them, and the ox was given to the reapers.”⁵

The most striking example of this motive is found in the life of Abbán.⁶ In contrast with the usually brief accounts of the miracles, the story is here told in elaborate, consciously literary, and homiletic form: “Quodam die cum aliis pueris coetaneis suis exeuntibus ad ludendum in agro sanctus Abbanus perrexit, et cum alii ludere cepissent, ipse seorsum exiuit, ut Deum adoraret. In loco quidem stetit, in quo circa eum vituli ville fuerunt. Tunc venit misera luppa cum catulis suis de silua propinqua per vitulos, et steterunt ante eum. Videns uero piissimus puer miseriam eorum, et eos macilentos fuisse, motus misericordia precepit eis, ut comederent vnum de vitulis. Statim luppi irruentes, occiderunt vitulum, et comederunt velociter. Nonne mirandum est, quod luppi esurientes per suam escam, et non tangentes ad sanctum venirent, et vituli, videntes deuoratores suos ad se uenientes, non fugerunt a seruo Dei? Tamen non est mirandum, quia Deus subiecit iumenta famulo sibi seruiendi pro duabus causis. Pro vna quidem ut ipse plus arderet in amore Dei; pro alia, ut dimitteretur ipse liber ad seruiendum Deo. Satiatis autem lupis, ire ceperunt circumeuntes eum, et quasi benedicentes ei pro suo prandio. Tunc contigit, ut pueri, de ludo cessantes, et querentes dominum suum, venirent ad locum, in quo erat sanctus puer, videntesque luppos cum eruentis capitibus sanguine vituli, accussare et increpare atrocissimis verbis sanctum puerum ceperunt. Pastores uero vlulare, et se lacerare pre timore non cessant, dicentes quod non viueret vituli mater. Porro Christi miles, audiens quod non viueret vac[e]a post mortem vituli sui, et pastores timoratos, motus misericordia orauit ad Dominum, dicens: ‘Domine Deus meus, qui fecisti hanc creaturam de nichilo, reuiuifica istum vitulum, ut ueniat viuus ad matrem suam.’ Hec et hiis similia sancto puero dicente, signauit signaculo crucis Christi cadaver, et ilico ante omnes qui erant ibi, caro et pellis ossa nuda induerunt, eratque eiusdem coloris et magnitudinis qualis prius fuerat; et surgens

⁵ *LS* 179. Other examples are (sheep) *VSH* 1.39; (deer) 2.188; (dog) *RC* 25.

⁶ *VSH* 1.6; *CS* 508f.

de terra, cucurrit ludens et mugiens ad alios vitulos. Pueri vero videntes hoc magnum miraculum, pro viribus suis ad castellum cucurrerunt, et nunciauerunt regi, quod factum fuerat."

Here again it will be noted that the bones play a significant part. Plummer has given special attention to the story.⁷ He believes, quite justifiably, that we have here a clear case of a secular folk-tale motive transferred to saint's legend, and cites, for example, the Icelandic story of Thor and the Peasant, in which the command is given not to break any of the bones of the animal resurrected.⁸

Other frequently repeated motives are the theft of calves by wolves, their restitution or replacement by wild animals, or by the thieving wolf's taking the stolen animal's place to comfort the bereaved mother. Examples of these will be found in the section on wolves, as the interest centers in the action of the wolf rather than in the stolen animal. The simple theme, too simple for effectiveness, of a calf or other animal strayed or lost while grazing and miraculously recovered rarely appears. A valued ox, "red with a white stocking", scion of Brendan's cow,⁹ ran away and was found by the admonition of Ciarán of Saighir, "Go to the Glen of the Young Ox and thou wilt find it and a herd beside." There it was, and seven score kine as well.

A theme of special interest in connection with the grazing of cattle is their restriction to special tracts by an invisible barrier traced on the ground or in the air, characteristically by use of the saint's baculum, bachal, or staff.¹⁰ This is one illustration of the miraculous efficiency attributed to the saint's staff as symbol of his power. Though properly a mere symbol indicating how his power is directed, it is plain that the attributes of the Druidic staff have been carried over to it, rendering it akin to the magic wand of heathen belief and subsequent folk-lore.

When Ciarán of Clonmacnois went to study at Clonard, he blessed the old Dun Cow and her calf that had followed him from home, and marked out a grazing ground with his staff,

⁷ *V S H* 1.cxl.iii.

⁸ Cf. *V S H* 1.238 where bones of eaten animals are made flesh.

⁹ *B N nE* 2.118.

¹⁰ *V S H* 1.205, *ibid.* 2.87 note 9; *CS* 229; *LS* 267f, *ibid.* 206.

beyond the bounds of which the calf could not go.¹¹ The people of the territory took refuge with Maedoc from an invading army. Maedoc drew a line about the cattle, and no one dared cross it except one chieftain who fell dead in the attempt.¹²

Many stories have as their theme the relation of cows and their calves before and after weaning. The trouble constantly experienced in keeping cows and calves separated while the calves are being weaned is obviated by the saint's command, the tracing of a line, or his mere presence. Saint Patrick, indeed, delegated his power to his herdsman, so that though cows and calves were pastured together, the calves neither approached nor departed from their mothers except at the herdsman's bidding.¹³ Saint Fintán "baculum interposuit, et ita matres et vituli a se invicem abcesserunt."¹⁴ Senán, after drawing a line between cows and calves, betook himself to his reading till the hour the cows should go to the 'milking-yard.'¹⁵ When Lugidus, as a boy, chanced to fall asleep in the field, the calves running to their mothers could not suckle while the boy slept.¹⁶ At another time, women, wishing to attract his attention, purposely drove the calves to their mothers. Hearing their cries, Lugidus hastened to the spot, but, seeing the deception of the women, fled away.¹⁷ A cow of stubborn temper persistently tried to get to her calf against the commands of Boethius, "et statim terra, aperiens os suum, uaccam illam inobedientem transglutiuit."¹⁸

The theme of the bereaved cow whose sorrow for her lost calf is appeased by another miraculously supplied, or by other means, often recurs. When the most blessed abbot Finan came into Corco Dhvibhne, he came to the house of Gayrbe who killed the calf of his one cow for his guest. "Sciens iam hoc sanctus Finan rogauit Deum, ut prohiberet dolorem cordis uacce illius

¹¹ *LS* 267f.

¹² *BN nE* 2.179.

¹³ Jocelyn 192.

¹⁴ *CS* 229.

¹⁵ *LS* 206.

¹⁶ *CS* 263; *VS H* 2.207.

¹⁷ *CS* 271.

¹⁸ *VS H* 1.93.

pro vitulo suo." Behold at his prayer there came a calf like the one that had been eaten, sent by God to fill its place. "Quem mater videns, gauisa est, et mugitum fecit in amore eius."¹⁹ Maedoc solved the difficulty of the sorrowing mother-cow in a more original way. When the herdsman complained of the cows' possible refusal to give their milk, the saint said: "Pone mihi caput tuum, ut benedicam illud. Et cum uiderint uacce caput tuum, diligent te, et dabunt lac suum." So it was. "Videntes enim uacce capud illius fratris, lingebant illud, et mulgebantur cum omni mansuetudine."²⁰

In a number of examples, pity for a bereaved mother is not the express motive for the restoration, but merely the recovery of the calf, particularly when it has been sacrificed for a saint's hospitality. A calf killed by a nun for Findian's guesting was found next day "alive with its mother."²¹ When visiting brothers came to Mochta's monastery, the saint, having no bread, ordered the calf killed, and in the evening it was found beside its mother.²² A poor woman, desiring to entertain Saint Brigit worthily, killed her one calf, and burned the beam of her loom with which to cook it. Her sacrifice did not go unmarked. "God so wrought for Brigit that the beam was whole on the morrow, and the cow was licking her calf."²³ Boecius brought to life the calf half cooked by thieves when it betrayed them by mooing in the cauldron.²⁴

The bringing back to life of dead animals is too frequent a commonplace in the hagiographic literature of all countries to merit special treatment in itself. Special cases of death inflicted upon animals, however, and of resuscitation after death, appear in various connections and are noted under them. Reference may here be made to a group of cases connected with the

¹⁹ *V S H* 2.89f.

²⁰ *V S H* 2.148, *ibid.* 301; *C S* 470; *BN nE* 2.206f.

²¹ *C S* 205; *L S* 227f.

²² *Boll* 3 Aug. 745; *C S* 910.

²³ *C S* 71; *Capg* 1.159; *L S* 197.

²⁴ *V S H* 1.94; other examples of this general motive are: *V S H* 1.93; 2.77; *C S* 828; 390f; 316; *Boll* 2 Feb. 835.

guarding of pasture land treated under the section on the products of the dairy below.²⁵

Miraculous cures of illness among cattle appear in several lives. Water blessed by Saint Munnu cured cattle sick of the plague.²⁶ Water in which bread blessed by Columcille had been dipped, sprinkled on men and cattle healed both of sore disease.²⁷ Saint Coemgen sprinkled water on an insane cow and calf and cured them.²⁸ This same saint also cured "The kine of the Gael" of plague by driving them through the "sacred wonder-working lough" from which he had removed the monster that infested it, whose story will appear in the section on monsters. The "gracious lough" removed their sickness "with its great anguish" and it went down stream to afflict the monster in the lower lake to which he had been removed.²⁹ A cow belonging to Patrick's foster-mother went mad and drove her horns into the next cow in the byre, killing her, and "the five best cows in the milking-place" then became victims. Patrick blessed the mad beast, whereupon she was "gentle as a sheep", and he furthermore brought back to life the cows she had slain.³⁰

There are several interesting references illustrating the belief that special markings are evidences of excellence in the animals so marked. Thus cows with red bodies and white heads³¹ or white with red ears are held especially desirable.³² This coloring seems to be associated with cattle of fairy origin.³³ The milk of a red-eared cow was set apart for the nourishment of little Brigit by her druid-father.³⁴ Likewise when Coemgen was a babe he was fed on the milk of a white cow that gave "duo magna vasa de lacte." No one knew whence this "mira alba

²⁵ See p. 27f.

²⁶ *V S H* 2.229.

²⁷ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 271.

²⁸ *Boll* 1 Junii 306.

²⁹ *BN nE* 2.131.

³⁰ *Trip* 437 App *Lebar Brecc*; *LS* 151f; Jocelyn 11.

³¹ Cf. *V S H* l.cxliv, 229.

³² *V S H* 1.59, *ibid.* 2.94; *BN nE* 2.215.

³³ See p. 217f.

³⁴ *Boll* 1 Feb. 120; *LS* 185.

vacca" came or whither she went at night and morning.³⁵ The infant Cainnech was similarly supplied.³⁶ The sixty miraculous cows supplied by Saint Ciarán and Brendan at King Furbaid's command were white with red ears.³⁷ In Ciarán II, the ransom called for only "seven sleek red calves with white heads."³⁸ The wonderful cow that God sent to Saint Enda and his monks had a red body and a white head, "ruffa erat corpore et capite candida."³⁹

The special value attaching to cows, also though in much less degree to oxen and calves, appears in a variety of evidence. Tribute was generally paid in cattle. Not alone church tithes due in kind, but also fees paid the church, may be assessed in terms of cattle. Tithes of first fruits include the first calf or first-born male of every milk-bearing animal. Findchua's dues from the Munstermen were the first calf, pig and sheep.⁴⁰ The seven milch cows given to Comgall every year by Scannlán were transferred to Findchua for thirty years to appease his wrath.⁴¹ A hundred of every kind of cattle also to Findchua from the King of Leinster.⁴² An illustration of church-fees involving payment in cattle is the costly baptism fee of Aed. Maedoc had baptized the King of Breifne, Aed Dub (the Black), after the king, who was hideous in appearance, had begged a change of form and feature of the saint. Maedoc put the head of Aed under his cowl where Aed fell asleep, "and the form which he put upon him was the form of Aedan son of Eichnech, the one most beautiful man of all the men of Erin in his time,"⁴³ and the name of Aed Finn (the Fair) was given him. Maedoc's tribute for this was "A cow from every stead, an ox from every raid, a foal from every stud, a pig from every sty, a sheep from

³⁵ *Boll* 1 Junii 305; *V S H* 1.235.

³⁶ *V S H* 1.152.

³⁷ *B N nE* 2.106.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 110.

³⁹ *V S H* 2.70.

⁴⁰ *L S* 245.

⁴¹ *L S* 233.

⁴² *L S* 239.

⁴³ *B N nE* 2.196, 257.

every flock . . . the horses and robes of the king of Breifne on his coronation day or else ten horses or twenty kine."

The value of cattle is also attested by the numerous stories of animals restored or replaced by others after a loss causing serious concern. A like implication is present in the many stories in which miraculous gifts of single animals or herds are made to meet the needs of a saint or monastery or the miraculous return of several animals in the place of one or more lost, or the miraculous increase of herds as a token of worth or honor. Saint Columcille blessed the five little cows of Nesan the hunchback, and they increased to one hundred five cows. He also blessed the cows, "very few in number", of Columban, and they increased to one hundred and five. The number in each case could in no wise be added to.⁴⁴ Thirty milch cows brought forth thirty calves the night of Brendan's birth. Airde, his foster-father, gave them to the new-born saint.⁴⁵ When Guaire the Hospitable finally persuaded Colmán to leave his forest retreat, the generous King gave him and his clerk "three score milch-cows with their milkers and their cow-boys."⁴⁶

MacCrechy, Saint Ailbe's alumnus, complained that the monastery had no cow; Ailbe bade him cast a stone among the brambles, whereupon a calf appeared.⁴⁷

Other examples appear above, — the miraculous cows given Coemgen and Cainnech, and the herd found with Brendan's lost ox.⁴⁸

A curious seeming exception is found in the case of several saints who refuse or receive unwillingly proffered gifts of cows or milk. Personal aversion may account for this, or excess of asceticism. The latter seems certainly the reason in Mochuda's case, who long refused to have any domestic animals, either for food or labor in the monastery.⁴⁹ He refused to permit cows or oxen to be used by his monks "sed monachi ejus sarculis et

⁴⁴ Adamn 71, 73. O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 303.

⁴⁵ *V S H* 1.98, *L S* 248.

⁴⁶ *Ériu* 1.47 (from *Yellow Book of Lecan*, tr. J. G. O'Keeffe).

⁴⁷ *C S* 251f.

⁴⁸ See pp. 16, 19, 20.

⁴⁹ *Boll* 3 Mai 383; *V S H* 1.188; *B N nE* 285, 287f.

pedibus omni anno arabant, et non nisi humeris suis onera portabant.” “It is a wretched thing,” said Saint Finan who was visiting Mochuda, “to make your monks into brute beasts; for it were better to have oxen for ploughing and draught than put such torture on the disciples of God.” An honorable man named Lasrianus came to visit Mochuda bringing secretly thirty milch-cows and a bull for the saint. As Ciarán had done with the water made milk by Brendan, so did Lasrianus with Mochuda. Then the latter inquired why his guest would not go to refecton with his monks. “I will not until thou accept alms from secular monks (tenants) and from everyone who wishes to offer it.” Mochuda agreed and Lasrianus left the thirty milch cows with him, and they made a compact of fraternity. For some unaccountable reason Saint Brendan of Birr declared he “would have no cows about him until doom.” Saint Ciarán wished him to accept his one cow. Brendan refused. Ciarán was at that time in Brendan’s dwelling. He complained of not feeling well and begged for some milk. Brendan blessed a “narrow brass vessel full of water” and made it milk. This was brought to Ciarán at the guest-house. Ciarán blessed it and it turned again into water. Then Brendan accepted the cow.⁵⁰ Bishop Erc, Saint Brendan of Clonfert’s foster-father, would not accept the alms of milk or a milch cow from anyone. Milk was supplied by a doe from Slieve Lougher for the little fosterling.⁵¹

The presence of cows in numbers seems to have been an indication of a monastery’s prosperity and of God’s blessing upon it. For example, when Patrick ordered Malachi, a Culdee of his household to bring back to life the son of Ailill who had been devoured by swine and whose bones Patrick had ordered to be brought before him, the man’s faith failed and Patrick prophesied his cloister would not be lofty on earth. “Five cows can hardly be found there forever.”⁵² To be sure it was with only five cows that Molua began his monastery, but they are de-

⁵⁰ *BN nE* 2.110f.

⁵¹ *BN nE* 2.46.

⁵² *Trip* 199.

scribed as "albas auribus rubicundis," and no doubt increased rapidly.⁵³

Gifts of cows as alms are frequently recorded, evidently as a most generous and most helpful form of charity. Such gifts are often recompensed by a multiplied return to the giver. Saint Ciarán of Clonmacnois gave a poor man his mother's cow and calf, whose anger was appeased when four cows appeared in their place. Again when on an errand of mercy three men gave him gifts, one of which was a cow, which, in the presence of the duke, he gave to the poor. In the same hour the duke replaced the gifts, for the one cow giving twelve.⁵⁴ Ciarán fared luckily, as when elsewhere he received four oxen for one given.⁵⁵ Apparently Saint Moling was not so fortunate though he gave the wife of Gobban the Wright and other women with her who came asking a gift of cattle, two cows each.⁵⁶

Here it may be noted that it may be no accident that in several cases cows are given to, indeed, asked for by, lepers. How great a curse leprosy was in the Middle Ages needs no explanation here, and Ireland, especially Munster, was sorely afflicted. The drinking of milk in the case of a wasting disease like leprosy may have been recognized as helpful—though in one or two cases oxen are given, not cows. References to lepers are notably numerous in the life of Saint Brigit. Brigit healed a leper who asked for a cow,⁵⁷ gave another leper a cow,⁵⁸ and yet again two lepers a cow as a joint gift. One leper haughtily took offence and made off with the cow, but the Liffey rose up and drowned both him and the cow. The humble leper fared better; a cow was brought in as a gift to herself, and this Brigit gave him.⁵⁹ The lovely story of the virgin Samthann's hearing the call of the leper from across the lake has a certain picturesqueness.

⁵³ *V S H* 2.215.

⁵⁴ *V S H* 1.202f, 207.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 203.

⁵⁶ *R C* 27.285 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. Whitley Stokes).

⁵⁷ *L S* 189.

⁵⁸ *Boll* 1 Feb. 137.

⁵⁹ *Boll* 1 Feb. 130; *L S* 194f.

Hastily climbing into her boat, she rowed across the lake, using her baculum as an oar. She gave him her one cow and calf and, like Saint Martin, part of her cloak. On her asking whence he came, the leper declared from the monastery of Saint Ultan. With that he disappeared. On her return the virgin found the cow and the calf safe in the byre and the cloak whole and entire. Christ Himself had importuned her and found her not wanting.⁶⁰ Two stories of oxen given to lepers may be included here, one the gift of Maedoc, of an ox to a leper woman, and of another to a leper which providentially appeased the hunger of a hell-beast.⁶¹

Cattle are often used in payment or barter. Two cows with their accompaniments are due from tenant to chief according to the *Brehon Laws*.⁶² The salary or payment due the Culdees for teaching boys to read was "a milch-cow for having taught the Psalter, hymns, canticles, lections, etc. to be paid on the showing or repeated; a calf, hogs, three sacks of malt and sack of corn a recompense for a year; a supply of raiment and victuals; the doctor or Bishop hearing them is entitled to a meal for five persons and beer and food for that night."⁶³ Probably the Dun Cow which Ciarán the younger took to Clonard and which fed other students besides himself may have in part paid for his tuition.

Cattle are exacted as tribute or ransom by princely right or by violence. For his services to the Munstermen Findehua received "a cow from every enclosure from Ard-chnoc to Dairinis at Imliuch and a milch cow to the cleric carrying his crozier wherever it shall be borne in battle."⁶⁴ A tribute of a beast from every herd was laid on the men and women of the neighborhood for the support of Saint Lasáir's church.⁶⁵ The seven milch cows, yearly tribute of Scannlán to Saint Comgall, were

⁶⁰ *V S H* 2.254.

⁶¹ *V S H* 2.150f, 152f; *B N nE* 2.210; see further, p. 224.

⁶² 4.325.

⁶³ Reeves: *Culdees*, 213.

⁶⁴ *L S* 241.

⁶⁵ *Ériu* 5.95 (from *Stowe Ms. B IV*, tr. by Lucius Gwynne).

transferred to Saint Findchua for thirty years to appease the anger of the youthful saint because of the king's illegal pasturing of his horses in the meadows of Comgall's school.⁶⁶ Aed offered Saint Patrick two "ox-gangs" of land where a foundation was made, and the grazing of one hundred cows with their calves and twenty oxen was likewise given by the King to the coppersmith of Patrick and his monks.⁶⁷ The royal ransom demanded of Ciarán of Cluain by the King deserves special attention. A cruel king near Clonmacnois gave Ciarán his treasure to keep. Ciarán distributed it to the poor. The King imprisoned Ciarán demanding "sixty white cows with red ears" as ransom. Ciarán begged leave to go in "quest of them". That night Ciarán dined with Ciarán of Saighir and Brendan. To Ciarán of Saighir he told his errand. The three went in quest of the cows, "they had not been going long when God sent (the kine) to them." Ciarán of Clonmacnois offered them to the King in place of his treasure. After they had been given the King, the cattle all "melted away and vanished."⁶⁸

Cattle-reaving was a main industry among primitive peoples, and the many stories of theft of this most prized and readily stolen possession form a picturesque feature in many saints' lives.⁶⁹ The formula for this class of stories is simple—the thieves are pursued, or the forces of nature bar flight, the stolen cattle are regained or find their own way back, the thieves are punished in some way, or repent and ask for mercy. In one instance, intending thieves planning to steal the cattle and goods of Comgall were struck blind.⁷⁰ Fergus who stole the cattle of certain holy virgins died that same night.⁷¹ After stealing the small herd of kine of the virgin Lasáir, Lothair the Lamé was brought back to Gill Rónain by the sharp swift ringing of the

⁶⁶ *LS* 233.

⁶⁷ *Trip* 133, 97.

⁶⁸ *CS* 817; *VSH* 1.230; *BNnE* 2.106; *Capg* 2.322. The amount and character of the ransom varies in the several versions.

⁶⁹ *VSH* 1.226; *BNnE* 2.306, 109f; Manus O'Donnell: *Betha Colaim Chille* 175.

⁷⁰ *VSH* 2.11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* 19.

“ceolan”, the saint’s bell.⁷² Moling stood in the way, and invaders could not pass to touch the flocks and herds of his people.⁷³ Saint Gerald of Mayo walked dryshod over a lake to an island where nine cattle-thieves were hiding. This judgment was pronounced upon them: “semen vestrum post uos non crescat ultra numerum nouenarium”.⁷⁴ Dub na Cat, the cow which supplied the milk for the monastery cat at Iona was stolen. She was found by the traces of her steps in the stones and earth, in a wood by a river called Fochrain. “Tobur Na Duibhe” is the well that burst forth in that place.⁷⁵ Rivers helped to trap and punish thieves. Thick darkness rose against the thief that stole Ciarán’s best cow, and a river in strong flood drowned him. The cow returned alone to Ciarán.⁷⁶ Thieves that stole two cows from Saint Mod(w)enna found the river so hot they could not ford it. Their feet were held so that they could not escape.⁷⁷ Saint Berach rendered motionless the hands of thieves who had stolen a cow from the monastery, so that they stood at the ford as if changed to stone.⁷⁸ The river Liffey rose up against thieves stealing the cows of Brigit’s guests. Though they put their garments on the beasts’ horns and drove them into the stream, the animals escaped, rushing, clothes and all, to the monastery at Kildare.⁷⁹

Stolen cattle already cooked are brought to life again. A stolen calf mooed in the cauldron of a thief and betrayed him. Boecius brought the cooked animal back to life.⁸⁰ Grac the Rebel stole a cow from Ruadsech the Red who blamed Moling. The clerics of the saint pursued Grac and took the cow, half burned, back to Moling. He restored it to life, and “the half of her that had been burnt was brown and the other half was

⁷² *Ériu* 5.73 (from *Stowe Ms.* tr. Lucius Gwynn).

⁷³ *V S H* 2.196f.

⁷⁴ *Boll* 2 Martii 286; *V S H* 2.112.

⁷⁵ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 175.

⁷⁶ *V S H* 1.226; *BN nE* 2.105.

⁷⁷ *Boll* 2 Julii 245; *Capg* 2.200.

⁷⁸ *V S H* 1.85.

⁷⁹ *Boll* 1 Feb. 137; *Capg* 1.156.

⁸⁰ *V S H* 1.94; cf. The flock of the stolen oxen of the sun bellowing on the spit. *Odyss* xii (396).

white." Moling himself kept the cow and she gave milk enough for twelve men every day.⁸¹ King Diarmuit slew his son because he had unjustly taken the cow of a nun when he was preparing a feast for his father. The king repented and went for solace to Columcille, who bade him seek the aid of Becan, "the ex-hero in the island of Ulaid." Columcille went with the king; when Becan saw the king, he exclaimed "Under the earth, thou parricide"! But on learning from Columcille the king's repentance, he "raised his right hand thrice to resuscitate Bresal—and at each prayer he brought fifty Bresals out of hell; and at the last prayer, Bresal, son of Diarmuit came with the last batch of them."⁸²

B. Dairy Products

Pasturage was afforded either by common land or by fields which were the private property of the monastic community. The monastic fields were jealously guarded against trespass, even when pasturage rights were demanded by persons of power. Trespass was punished by the infliction of death upon the animals pastured, or some form of miraculous judgment upon their owners. Examples of horses as well as cattle may for convenience be included here. Thus when the king forcibly quartered his cattle in the monastery fields, Féchín rang his bell at them "so that they found death withal"—but brought them back to life when the king repented.⁸³ Patrick similarly caused the death of Daire's horses, but later raised them to life.⁸⁴ Mochoemog refused to pasture Fland's horses and blinded the king for his insolence, later when he repented, restoring his sight.⁸⁵ For Scannlán's illegal pasturing of his horses in the meadows of Comgall's school, Findchua turned the king's horses into stones.⁸⁶ Because Darbarchú was asserting his right in guard-

⁸¹ *RC* 27.287f (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.* tr. by Whitley Stokes).

⁸² *LS* xxviii; Keating, Rev. Jeoffrey: *General History of Ireland*, tr. Dermot O'Connor, 365.

⁸³ *Boll* 2 Jan. 694; *VSH* 2.77; *RC* 12.349 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

⁸⁴ *Jocelyn* 215; *LS* 165.

⁸⁵ *VSH* 2.174.

⁸⁶ *LS* 233.

ing his grazing field from Brendan's cattle which had entered there, and killed the saint's oxen, Brendan changed him into an otter.⁸⁷ Those who know report that a man incurred a serious charge in that in Saint Patrick's presence, he drove with violence the two oxen which drew the saint's chariot, while they were resting and browsing. Patrick cursed his field, and said that it should be barren until eternity. The sea inundated the field in fulfilment of the curse.⁸⁸

The special grace accorded sainthood might take the form of abundant pasture. In commemoration of the birth of holy Coemgen, the fort where he was born was blessed with rich grass even in winter with snow covering the ground elsewhere.⁸⁹

Beside the byres, shed and folds of the farm buildings, the "milking-place" is mentioned, where apparently cows were milked in the open. Cows at pasture some distance away were milked in the field, the pails and milk being transported by horses, as in the story of Ruadán below. In the life of Brigit a "mountain dairy" is spoken of, for convenience, no doubt, in upland pastures, as in mountainous districts today. Special shelters on distant pastures are spoken of in a sensational incident at the famous monastery of Saint Gall. A brother who had charge of the cattle of the monastery made a stable for them in a remote place of pasture. Two men set fire to the stable by night. One of them rushed out and proclaimed: "Stabula pecorum B. Galli succendi", and that he himself was being consumed by an invisible fire. The fire was put out by no human means, and the man died insane. The other drew away two oxen because of a debt owed him, and he was not punished, but permitted to take the beasts with him.⁹⁰

We have glimpses of milk being carried from the milking-place to the kitchen or store-room, and there is frequent mention of its use, and of foods prepared from it. Accidents are miraculously rectified, supplies found too scanty increased, cows

⁸⁷ *B N nE* 2.79.

⁸⁸ *Trip* 292 App *Muirchu's Notes*; Bury, J. B., *Life of Saint Patrick* 92.

⁸⁹ *B N nE* 2.122; cf. Féchín *VSH* 2.77; *RC* 12.349 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

⁹⁰ *Boll* 7 Oct. 904.

meet exigencies with enormous yields, extraordinary richness and celestial favors are bestowed upon milk or foods made from it. The following stories will serve to illustrate the range and character of the references; many merely casual mentions of the use of milk and its products are omitted.

The cook of the monastery of Saint Ruadán brought the milk from the milking-place on a horse. Seven days running demons had spilled the milk by knocking with iron mallets on the pails, when Ruadán discovered them and condemned them in Christ's name to the deep lake to remain there.⁹¹ The bringing in of the milk is the subject of a delightful story told of Columcille.⁹² A careless brother who had not driven out the demon lurking in the milk-pail, was commanded by Saint Columcille to bring the pail to him that he might bless it. The devil flying out caused the milk to spill, but Columcille again blessed the empty pail and forthwith it was filled again.⁹³

Milk is miraculously increased. Saint Brigit milked Kildare's one cow for the third time—"vaccam unam contra consuetudinem in una die tribis vicibus mulsit"—to meet the needs of sudden guests. There was enough milk to fill all the vessels of the whole of Leinster. The overflow made a lake seen even until this day, called Loch in Ais.⁹⁴ The cows came a third time to the milking-place when bishop-guests came to Brigit, and the milk they had there was greater than at any other milking.⁹⁵ When the clerk Bardanus upset a cauldron of milk, Ciarán blessed the cauldron and it thereupon became full.⁹⁶ A woman entertaining Moling and his gillie brought them a cow's milk-

⁹¹ *V S H* 2.242f; *BN nE* 2.309f; cf. *ibid.* 107.

⁹² Adamn 69. Manus O'Donnell: *Betha Colaim Chille* 301.

⁹³ Possibly this custom in Iona and elsewhere finds traditional continuance in the modern phrase "God bless the work". Ancient Irish law (*Senchus Mór* 1.133, 151; *Brehon Laws* 5.98f) required that a workman bless the work when finished and before delivering it over. A fine equal to one seventh of his feeding was levied from his hire, if the law was not complied with. The first person seeing a piece of work after it was finished was also required to give it a blessing under penalty of fine. Women, too, must bless the work of women.

⁹⁴ *Boll* 1 Feb. 133, 136; *LS* 197.

⁹⁵ *LS* 197.

⁹⁶ *BN nE* 2.111.

ing, and though both drank of the vessel, the contents were not less.⁹⁷ Duinecha at his steading gave Mochuda and his company, their number being "three fifties and three thousands", refreshment consisting of "three beeves and three tubs of milk."⁹⁸ The miraculous cow given Enda and his brethren in Aran gave enough milk for all.⁹⁹

A miraculous improvement in the quality of milk is the subject of other stories. In Coemgen's desert glen a certain cow of Dimma's herd lighted upon the saint and licked his feet. Every day the animal did the same, and her yield of admirable milk was much greater than that of any other.¹⁰⁰

Milk was valued as a beverage, as a food, as helpful in sickness, was proffered to guests and was given as a welcome alms to wayfarers and beggars. It is miraculously made from water for special reasons. Mochuda and his following, "three fifties and three thousand", were fed at Duinecha's steading on their journey with "three beeves and three tubs of milk."¹⁰¹ A poor man begged wine, ale, and milk of Mochuda. Raising his hand over a fountain, Mochuda made three divisions of it, one of wine, one of ale, one of milk. The poor man drank his fill and was healed. Mochuda blessed the fountain, and restored it to its natural state.¹⁰² Ciarán's Dun Cow at Clonard gave twelve measures of milk, one for each of the twelve apostles of Ireland, affording support to him and fellow-students.¹⁰³ The dead child of a dairy-woman of Patrick's foster-mother was brought to life by drinking the new milk along with the young Patrick.¹⁰⁴ Water changed to milk by Brigit healed a nun of a "sore disease."¹⁰⁵ Ciarán wished Brendan to accept a milch-cow.

⁹⁷ *RC* 27.293 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

⁹⁸ *BN nE* 2.174.

⁹⁹ *VSH* 2.70.

¹⁰⁰ *BN nE* 2.123-133-153; *CS* 838; cf. the story of Grac the Rebel above, p. 26f.

¹⁰¹ *BN nE* 2.174.

¹⁰² *BN nE* 2.290.

¹⁰³ *Calendar of Oengus* 203.

¹⁰⁴ *LS* 152; *Trip App Lebar Brece* 437.

¹⁰⁵ *LS* 189.

He would not. Ciarán said he felt ill and asked his host for milk. Brendan changed water to milk, Ciarán turned it to water again. Then Brendan accepted the cow.¹⁰⁶

Butter, though it was highly esteemed, is rather infrequently mentioned in the *Lives*. Salt butter, as now, was considered inferior to fresh. A "roll of fresh butter" was part of the viands for the May Day feast. The *Brehon Laws* regarding fosterage prescribe salt butter for farmers' sons with their stir-about, fresh for the sons of chiefs, and honey for kings' sons.¹⁰⁷ One curious use was for the dressing of hides, and for this purpose butter formed part of the provisioning of Brendan's ship. It might be demanded as tribute. Curd and butter were demanded of Patrick's foster-mother, though it was winter and she had none. Patrick made curd and butter of the snow. Shown to the King, they turned again to snow. The King remitted the tribute.¹⁰⁸ Fifty persons made use of the "magnum cortex" of butter sent Ruadán and his monks in the Spring, and by Pentecost it was still undiminished.¹⁰⁹ Brigit's mother was in bondage at a "mountain dairy" having twelve cows with her "and she collecting butter." Brigit began to serve with her mother. The churning was divided into twelve portions in honor of the twelve Apostles, the thirteenth set apart in honor of Christ for the poor. "For she used to say that Christ was in the person of every faithful guest." The Druid mage and his wife went to the dairy having a great hamper eighteen hands high to be filled with butter. The mage declared they had come to see how the dairy profited. "Of butter, what hast thou?" Brigit had none in readiness, save the making of one churning and a half. Then she went into the kitchen saying:

"O my Prince
Who canst do all these things
Bless, O God,—a cry unforbidden—
My kitchen with Thy right hand.

¹⁰⁶ *BN nE* 2.110.

¹⁰⁷ *Brehon Laws* 2.149.

¹⁰⁸ *LS* 152; *Trip* 439 App *Lebar Brecc*.

¹⁰⁹ *Boll* 2 April 382; *VSH* 2.250.

My kitchen,
 The kitchen of the white God,
 A kitchen which my King hath blessed,
 A kitchen that hath butter.

Mary's Son, my Friend, cometh
 To bless my kitchen
 The Prince of the world to the border
 May we have abundance with him."

Then she brought forth the half making of her churning from the kitchen. The mage's wife mocked. "Fill the hamper", said Brigit, "and God will put somewhat therein." Back and forth she came from the kitchen singing a stave as she went. "If the hampers which the men of Leinster possessed had been given her, she would have filled them all." The mage gave her the butter as a reward.¹¹⁰

Maedoc's own steward came to him saying: "We have nothing in the world in the kitchen but one vessel of drink and a little butter, and we do not know whether to give it to the monks or to the guests." Maedoc answered: "Give it to both of them without stint, as if there were in the kitchen as much as it could hold of every kind of food and drink." After this there was no lack of food or drink through the power of God."¹¹¹ The "vnum vrceum ceruicie et vas mediocre butyri, et modicum farine" blessed by Saint Cronán satisfied one hundred twenty men who had come with Mochoemog of Liath and the monks that came guesting.¹¹²

Whey is mentioned, but seems (as also buttermilk) to have been considered a thin drink specially suitable for ascetic use or fasting, and at that mixed with water. It was in constant use among the Culdees.¹¹³ Patrick sent the reapers for their thirst "a pitcher of whey water."¹¹⁴

Milk and such products from it as butter, curd, cheese, called "white meat" as distinguished from flesh, might be permissible

¹¹⁰ *LS* 186f; cf. *Boll* 1 Feb. 120.

¹¹¹ *BN nE* 2.223.

¹¹² *VHS* 2.27f.

¹¹³ Reeves, *Culdees*, 203, 206, 208f.

¹¹⁴ *Trip* 337.

food on fast-days. Curd, which has already appeared in several references, and various forms of cheese made from it, were highly valued. "Curd-cheese," half-curd, half-cheese, was often paid as rent, or tribute, as in the story above of Patrick's foster-mother. Húi Lilaig gave Patrick poison in curd cheeses, but Patrick blessed them and they turned to stone.¹¹⁵ To confound a mage, he changed hard stones to soft cream cheese, and two pieces back into stone, which still remain.¹¹⁶ When Coemgen sent Cellach to look for alms, women carrying soft cheeses in the corner of their mantles denied they had them. The cheeses at Coemgen's petition were turned by God to stone.¹¹⁷ Hard cheese, pressed in a mould called "tanag", with three curd cheeses, were brought to Patrick as a gift by Nessán with a wether in the strange story of the band of mimes which the earth swallowed up, which will be told in greater fullness in the section on fish.¹¹⁸

C. Oxen

Oxen appear in many stories, which, however, fall under a few simple motives. They serve as draught-animals in ploughing (six in one case), in drawing wagons (rarely chariots), and as beasts of burden. Journeys are made with them, and in several cases of special interest, they are used in funeral processions. The miracles describe half-broken or wild oxen tamed; missing beasts supplied or their absence obviated through plow or cart functioning as if a missing beast were still present; ploughing, or journeys, or both, performed without human guidance; roads opened before them or their instant translation to their destination; and the like. Certain stories concerning important questions regarding the deposition of saints' bodies being left to their decision are reserved for a later section on the belief in the possession by animals of occult powers.

A ploughman ploughing with six wild oxen fell between ploughshare and coulter. Maedoc, though a hundred miles away,

¹¹⁵ *Trip* 183; cf. Jocelyn 167.

¹¹⁶ Cf. the related stories in Jocelyn 207; *Trip* 249.

¹¹⁷ *BN nE* 2.161.

¹¹⁸ *LS* 162f: see p. 189.

tamed the oxen so that the ploughman escaped unharmed.¹¹⁹ Maedoc, studying with Saint David at Wales, was bidden by the "oeconomus" to plough with two wild oxen. At touch of the boy's hand, they became tame.¹²⁰ A wild young ox is yoked with a tame cart-ox by order of Saint Fintan. "Et statim vitulus iste sub iugo positus mitis et domitus factus est."¹²¹ The oxen belonging to Berach's plough-team went mad and ran away. The saint prophesied that though they might scour the country, they would be safe and in their right senses by night. Every place in which this team ploughed belonged hereafter to Saint Berach.¹²²

Often the place of a missing ox is filled by another animal.¹²³ A horse took the place of an ox given away by the younger Ciarán, and four oxen were sent him to requite his uncle.¹²⁴ When Aidan gave one of the plough-oxen to a poor beggar, "jugum . . . potestas Dei ex altera parte mirabiliter sustinebat."¹²⁵

Oxen go long distances, complete ploughing and return of themselves. Ailbe sent a poor man two oxen with red ears each year to plough for him. After ploughing, the oxen returned alone to Ailbe.¹²⁶ It was the elder Ciarán's custom to send two oxen for spring ploughing to his old nurse Saint Cuinche. The oxen went, ploughed and returned to Ciarán by themselves.¹²⁷ The thieves that stole two beeves from Colman Ela's monastery were fixed to the earth and the oxen found their way home alone.¹²⁸

Oxen at need find roads made for them even through impossible places. When Ruadán was given the famous "cortex" of

¹¹⁹ *V S H* 2.152, 303f; *B N nE* 2.216f.

¹²⁰ *V S H* 2.144f, 298.

¹²¹ *C S* 400.

¹²² *B N nE* 2.38.

¹²³ *V S H* 1.203; *B N nE* 2.214, 216.

¹²⁴ *V S H* 1.203.

¹²⁵ *Boll* 4 Nov. 506; *V S H* 1.36.

¹²⁶ *V S H* 1.59; *C S* 253.

¹²⁷ *B N nE* 2.115; *Silva Gad* 2.11.

¹²⁸ *V S H* 1.264.

butter that lasted fifty persons from Spring to Pentecost, it was placed on two unbroken oxen which passed over soft peat-land on a firm road never seen before or after.¹²⁹ So also, God made a smooth and easy road, a firm and level path through soft bog for Maedoc's oxen and cart.¹³⁰ Likewise oxen are miraculously saved in perilous places or may be translated bodily for distances. In a slough up to their necks, they are drawn out by Saint Buite's prayers.¹³¹ Fallen over a precipice, Saint Maedoc's prayers saved them.¹³² When oxen and cart fell into the sea, Aidan made the sign of the cross over the water, and both came safe from the waves.¹³³ An ox brought to the point of death by the evil spells of druids was restored by Columcille.¹³⁴ With the sea full in on Senán and his oxen, the tides were held back till they were safe.¹³⁵ Ploughshare and ox given to Saint Colmán were miraculously translated to the monastery.¹³⁶

The use of cow and ox-hides for leather call for attention here. No significant mention of leather appears as used for clothing, harness or the like, though certainly so used. But peculiar interest attaches to the use of skins for sheathing wicker-framed boats, and larger vessels as well. Brendan's ship was made of wicker-work, and its sides and ribs covered with cow-hides tanned in oak, their joinings smeared within and without with "myrrh and bitumen and pitch and rosin."¹³⁷ It was provisioned for fifty days with butter enough to dress these hides when needing repair.¹³⁸ Saint Ita, Brendan's foster-mother, counselled him to have boats made of timber, prophesying: "'the country thou art seeking from God, ye will never find on these dead soft skins.'" ¹³⁹ Indeed, a boat without a

¹²⁹ *Boll* 2 April 382.

¹³⁰ *BN nE* 2.178, 202.

¹³¹ *VSH* 1.95.

¹³² *BN nE* 2.204.

¹³³ *Capg* 1.258.

¹³⁴ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 303.

¹³⁵ *LS* 205f.

¹³⁶ *CS* 425.

¹³⁷ *BN nE* 2.52.

¹³⁸ Cf. *Silva Gad* 2.386.

¹³⁹ *BN nE* 2.63.

hide was unusual and only used when a boat with a skin was unavailable, as is evident from the story of Saint Ciarán's coming to Senán at Scatterry Island in a boat without a hide, "for there was no other boat on the island that could be brought to him."¹⁴⁰ MacCuille, an Ulster chief, converted by Saint Patrick, was put off to sea in a curragh of one hide as a punishment.¹⁴¹ Saint Enna's thrice fifty monks were put every noon into a curragh without a hide as a test of their virtue. If the salt water came in, someone had sinned, if not, all were pure.¹⁴² A singular use of hides is mentioned in the following story: After Constantine of Alba had joined Mochuda as a monk at Rahen, he was permitted to visit Alba to see clan and kindred. His food was reserved for him until he returned, and it was set down before him on a hide all mixed together, pottage and milk and corn.¹⁴³ Evidently books were carried in cases made of leather, as one reads of Longarad in the 6th century that his books hung in "pólares", or leather cases from pegs on the monastery walls.¹⁴⁴ By Patrick's command, the skin of a cow (or possibly of a seal) was made into a wallet by his gillie.¹⁴⁵ For twenty years the great saint had stood upon it in celebrating Mass. A dispute arose as to who was the possessor of the wallet. It was decided to put the wallet in the earth "and the stead that swallowed it", there should be the saint's place of abode. In Jocelyn's record of this same legend or one very similar, the book satchels clearly were made of seal skin.¹⁴⁶ Six priests came to visit Patrick, from over the seas. The saint observed one of them elder and shorter than the rest, carrying in his bosom all their volumes. Whereupon Patrick ordered that the seal-skin on which he was used to stand while celebrating Mass be given to the priest "that he might make thereof a satchel." Miraculous was the later use of the hide of Ciarán's

¹⁴⁰ *LS* 218; cf. *Silva Gad* 2.510n.

¹⁴¹ *Trip* 223.

¹⁴² *Silva Gad* 2.510n (from *LL* 347:8 B B 111a).

¹⁴³ *BNnE* 2.291; *Fél*² 93f.

¹⁴⁴ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 219.

¹⁴⁵ *Trip* 75.

¹⁴⁶ *Jocelyn* 131.

Dun Cow. Ciarán on leaving Clonard left the Dun with Ninnid, but prophesied "that her hide would come to him afterward", and that "though a multitude would be helped by her milk, there would be more to whom her hide would give help."¹⁴⁷ So it was. "Now the Dun's hide is at Clonmacnois, and what soul soever separates from its body on that hide inhabits eternal life."¹⁴⁸ The later version of *The Revealing of the Táin* transfers the discovery of the Táin from the pagan bards to the Christian saints, and declares that Ciarán of Cluain took down the tale from the spirit of Fergus on the hide of the Dun Cow.¹⁴⁹

As "though it had been glover's leather", Molaisse, from his own mantle, made "gloves of price" for the young clerics clearing away a brake, and of a second part of the same mantle "bark-soaked brogues, like tanner's leather."¹⁵⁰

D. Use of Flesh for Food

References to the eating of veal and beef are not very numerous, less so than to the use of smaller animals such as sheep and swine. There is no indication that this is due to the exceptional austerity of the religious; the diet of grains and shredded greens, berries and roots, belongs characteristically to the anchorites and hermits. A substantial part of the food on the monastic table, except on fasting days, consisted of meat, as among lay-folk. On the monastic farm, we may assume the practice was much as on farms today. Unneeded bull-calves were eaten, cows when barren or old, and oxen too old to labor. Special provision was made for certain occasions, as the harvest, the entertainment of guests, or feast days. There is no direct evidence in the *Lives* of beef-cattle actually grown for eating, as now, but there are interesting references to their being slaughtered for food.

The description of Ciarán of Saighir's barn is thus described in a note in *Féilire*². "Wondrous, indeed, was Holy Ciarán of Saighir. Many cattle had he, for there were ten doors to the

¹⁴⁷ *LS* 272.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 268.

¹⁴⁹ O'Donnell, *Manus: Betha Colaim Chille* 165.

¹⁵⁰ *Silva Gad* 2.33 (from *Additional*).

shed of his kine; and ten stalls for every door, and there were ten calves in every stall and ten cows with every calf." The notes finish thus: "Ciarán so long as he was alive consumed not any kine, small or great of their relish, nor of their produce," but distributed it to the poor and needy of the Lord.¹⁵¹

Still more striking is the description of Columcille's unwillingness to have living creatures slain for food. A brother, Molua, came to Columcille asking him to bless a weapon. The saint was writing and made the Sign of the Cross with his pen over the object, his face still turned to the book on which he was writing. On inquiring later of his faithful servant, Diarmuid, what weapon he had blessed, the servant replied, "A dagger for cutting the throats of oxen and of bulls." Columcille exclaimed: "I trust in my God that weapon which I blessed will injure neither man nor beast." That very hour when the brother wanted to kill an ox he could not pierce even its skin. Then the monks melted the metal of the dagger and anointed with it all the iron weapons of the monastery. Thereafter, they were unable to inflict a wound on any flesh because of the "abiding power of the saint's blessing."¹⁵²

To this story, there is a curious pendant, also in *Adamnán*,¹⁵³ which illustrates the same sensibility. It tells how a poor man on whom Columcille, because of his hopeless penury took compassion. The poor man had no food for his wife and children, and knew not where to find it. Columcille took a stake from a neighboring wood, fashioned a spear from it, and gave it to the man, "Carefully keep the spear which will be able to hurt neither man nor cattle, but only wild animals and also fishes, and so long as thou hast this, there will never be wanting in thy house a supply of deer's flesh." No day passed that a hart or hind or some other animal had not fallen on the spear fixed in the ground, and the poor man sold the venison to the neighbors. His wife bade him take the spear out of the ground, being fearful that man or cattle might be harmed. He moved it to a

¹⁵¹ *Félz* 89.

¹⁵² *Adamn* 80f; *Boll* 2 Junii 217; O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 265.

¹⁵³ *Adamn* 89.

secluded part of the wood, but a roe had fallen on it when he came again. Next he fixed it in a river, but a salmon of great size was transfixed upon it. Finally, urged by his wife's foolish fears, the man chopped the spear into little pieces and cast them into the fire. Again he was reduced to beggary, for "the freedom from want depended upon the stake which could suffice for snares and nets and every kind of hunting and fishing through the benediction of the holy man." What, one wonders, was the motive of the folk-tale from which this story draws? Most interesting and striking in both tales is the distinction drawn between men and beasts (i. e. cattle) on the one hand and wild animals as legitimate food on the other—also the fear of the wife lest her husband be involved in serious trouble through harm done to man or cattle.

One may assume that men of rank and wealth with large herds habitually slaughtered animals grown for food. That animals were specially designated and kept for food appears certainly in the ordinances for the brewy, houses of entertainment for wayfarers, even if all allowance is made for the inevitable touch of hyperbole. According to the *Brehon Laws*, they should have in readiness for guests: "two hundred of each kind of cattle, except dogs and cats, two hundred men in condition of workmen in right of these to be paid 'dire'. The lawful wealth of a brewy, i. e., a pig, sheep and ploughing-ox for use of cauldron and three kinds of raw meat, three kinds of boiled meat and three kinds of live meat or legitimate wealth, i. e., three boiled joints may always be in it, i. e., of the ox, the cow with the accompaniments fat and lean."¹⁵⁴

Many stories have already been given which illustrate the use of veal and beef as food. It is not necessary to resume these here, or the many casual references which appear. The motive of the restoration of animals slain by persons of slender means to entertain guests has already been amply illustrated. Another motive is the extension of an insufficient supply to meet special needs. Mochuda's "thrice fifties and three thousands" were fed

¹⁵⁴ *Brehon Laws*, 1.47f; cf. the Hostel of Blai Bruga, with its "Seven cauldrons, and an ox with a flitch in each cauldron of them," *LS* xliii from *Acallam Bec* ('Little Dialogue').

with "three beeves and three tubs of milk,"¹⁵⁵ With the flesh of one ox and the shoulder of another Ciarán (Saighir) regaled the men of Munster after preventing their encounter with the Ulstermen.¹⁵⁶ Ciarán the Elder also multiplied ox-flesh to feed a multitude that had come to hear Patrick at Saighir.¹⁵⁷ The oxen of his plough-team were killed by Saint Berach for Columcille's entertainment after the gathering at Druimceatt, and the two saints made covenant.¹⁵⁸ Likewise the ox that drew the cart with his books was killed by Fintan for Dimma's entertainment.¹⁵⁹

A motive of very special interest appears in stories in which self-righteousness as to eating on a monastic fast-day meets with saintly rebuke. As the tyrannical "oeconomus", or steward becomes a type-figure in the *Lives*, so is the conceited and tactless "conversus", too scrupulous, pretentiously or censoriously, to eat on fast-day food that hospitality has provided. In order that this motive may be illustrated more effectively, stories in which other food than beef, notably pork and bacon, is the food refused are here included.

In one case the sinner is told he is doomed at a future time to eat horseflesh. Columcille was visiting on the island of Hinba. Because of the great Abbot's coming, there was allowed the penitents an indulgence of food. One penitent, Neman, refused to accept this relaxation, whereupon Columcille prophesied that he should eat secretly mare's flesh in a wood with robbers.¹⁶⁰ After Crumthir Caelan killed his plough-ox for the entertainment of Saint Enda and his disciples, one layman refused to break his abstinence. Whereupon Enda declared that he would eat the flesh of mad horses and would strangle.¹⁶¹ Brendan of Clonfert was visiting Brendan of Birr. It was

¹⁵⁵ *BN nE* 2.174.

¹⁵⁶ *BN nE* 2.115.

¹⁵⁷ *VSH* 1.225; *BN nE* 2.104, 115; *Silva Gad* 2.10 (*Egerton* from *Codex Kilkenniensis*, John Colgan).

¹⁵⁸ *BN nE* 2.39.

¹⁵⁹ *CS* 399f.

¹⁶⁰ *Adamn* 27.

¹⁶¹ *VSH* 2.73.

quadagesima "et in parascheue specialiter", Brendan of Birr, because he had no other food to set before them, cooked the flesh of swine. Without a qualm of conscience the ministers of the gospel ate what the holy man's hospitality set before them. One "conversus", however, would eat only bread. The next day what remained of the meat of the brothers appeared pure wheat bread, but what remained of the bread of the "conversus" appeared raw flesh swarming with worms. Brendan prophesied "Isto anno carnem iumentis lactantis pullum suum igni assatam in siluis comedes; et eadem hora ab inimicis iugulab[er]is."¹⁶² In the same manner, Ciarán predicted that the lay-brother who refused to eat of bacon turned miraculously into fish would be punished therefor. Ciarán of Clonmacnois, the two Brendans (of Birr and Clonfert) were guesting at Saighir. Saint Ciarán sent for his cook: "What hast thou to set before these guests?" The cook declared he had a gammon of bacon, "but I bethink me that it is a fast." When it was set before the guests at the saint's command, it was found to be fish and honey and oil. Now "a lay-brother would not sup with them because he had seen the gammon of bacon in the cook's hands." Saint Ciarán prophesied: "Thou shalt eat beef red-raw in Lent and that very hour thou shalt be slain by thine enemies and shalt not receive the kingdom of heaven."¹⁶³ The same story, varying slightly in detail, is told of Ruadán.¹⁶⁴ One time Ruadán told his monks that on the coming of holy guests, they should eat meat. But there was one 'conversus monachus' who did not wish to eat meat "in caritate". The bread he was eating, nevertheless, appeared before all as raw and bloody flesh. Seeing this the holy Ruadán blessed a part of the flesh that all were consuming and it became bread. Then he blessed the raw flesh which had been turned into flesh from bread in the hands of the 'conversus', and it became bread again.¹⁶⁵ The blessed Lasrian was entertaining Saint Brendan and although it was a monastic fasting-day, he ordered the

¹⁶² *VSH* 1.146.

¹⁶³ *BN nE* 2.110; *VSH* 1.229f.

¹⁶⁴ *VSH* 2.249.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *VSH* 2.249; for multiplying of other food, *ibid.* 2.27f, 254.

brethren to eat the meat that had been prepared for them. One neophyte who was with Brendan transgressed the command and kept his share of swine's flesh until the next day. When on the morrow what he had reserved touched his hand—behold the fingers dripped blood like water! Seeing this, the monk repented and asked pardon for his fault, whereupon the raw flesh which he had reserved was changed into pure wheat bread.¹⁶⁶

How prodigious appetites might be in those days is perhaps indicated by Mael-Uma's eating the ox intended for Columcille's reapers in a story told above.¹⁶⁷ How generous also the provision for guests, by the "pig and bull-calf" placed in the bowl for the Easter dinner provided by Guaire the Hospitable for Saint Colmán and his clerk in the forest.¹⁶⁸

E. Special Topics

Several subjects, not falling naturally under the above treatment, and of some special interest, call for separate mention.

In certain stories, animals may play an important part, but, so far as they are concerned, an accidental and neutral part. For example, Ciarán's gospel had been dropped into the lake. The strap caught in the hoof of a cow wading in the lake, and she brought the book to land with her dry and unharmed. "Hence is called Port in Sosceoil, ('the Harbour of the Gospel') in Inis Angin today."¹⁶⁹

Sometimes places, such as the sites of future monasteries, burial places, places of temporary sojourn, are prophetically marked as to be recognized by the presence of certain wild animals, as will appear below. In a number of stories on the other hand, animals, notably cattle, play a conspicuous part, performing extraordinary acts without human guidance, as in several related above, or are made the agencies through which important decisions are made. Invisible celestial direction is presumably to be assumed, but is in only one or two instances actually

¹⁶⁶ *V S H* 2.139.

¹⁶⁷ See p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ *Ériu* 1.45 (from *Yellow Book of Lecan*, tr. by J. G. O'Keeffe).

¹⁶⁹ *L S* 275.

affirmed. The stories read like similar incidents in folk-tales. The appearance of five cows "albas auribus rubicundis" marked the beginning of Saint Molua's monastery at Ross Bualeadh.¹⁷⁰

Of special interest are certain cases in which other important decisions are made through the agency of animals, for example, the determination of boundaries, the place of deposition of a saint's body, the settlement of rivalry for a saint's aid or bounty, the finding of a saint's body.

The grazing of cows might fix boundaries. The distance the cow, given by Ciarán to Brendan, grazed marked the boundary between the two saints and their families.¹⁷¹

In the discussion as to what province should have the body of holy Molua after death, one reads that an angel appeared and commanded that the body be placed on a "plauastro" or wain to which two untamed oxen were harnessed, "et dimit[t]ite eis ire quocunque voluerint". The oxen went to Cluain Ferta and stood with the wain before the monastery.¹⁷² An angel counselled Saint Patrick as to how he should be buried. "Let two unbroken oxen of the cattle of Conall be brought out of Finnbair, that is from Clochar, and let thy body be set at the cross-roads and whithersoever they shall go, and whithersoever they shall stay by themselves, be it there thou shalt be buried."¹⁷³ From popular tradition comes a story of singular interest. When Lúbán the mermaid was caught in the net of Fergus of Miluis, the right to her was disputed by Beoan whom the mermaid had promised to meet at Inbher Ollarbha, and by Comgall in whose territory she was taken by Fergus himself. They prayed for a heavenly decision. Two wild oxen came down from the mountains and on being yoked to a chariot in which she was placed, drew her to Teach-Dabeoc where she was baptized by Comgall, with the name Muirgen, i. e., born of the sea, or Muirgeilt, i. e., traverser of the sea.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ *VSH* 2.215. For examples of other animals cf. (deer) *VSH* 1.79, 210; (boar) *ibid.* 2.88, 241, 170; (boar and deer) *Trip* 191; (boar) *Capg* 1.249; (sow) *CBS* 8-9; (stag) *RC* 5.443; (deer) *CS* 231.

¹⁷¹ *BNNE* 2.110. For animals fixing boundaries see also *VSH* l. exliv n. 7.

¹⁷² *VSH* 2.224.

¹⁷³ *Trip* 255, 298 App *Muirchu's Notes*; *LS* 167; Jocelyn 261; cf. *Capg* 1.503.

¹⁷⁴ *FM—Annals of Ulster* (571) 63 tr. by William Hennessy; *Félz* 53.

Finnian of Clonard's disciples wanted him to consecrate each of their churches. The saint affirmed he would go with the disciple his dun cow would follow. The animal followed Molaisse, whereupon the old man went with his pupil to Devenish and remained there for a year.¹⁷⁵

It may be permissible to add the following story, though from popular tradition:¹⁷⁶ When Columcille was dying he bade his monks put his body in a curragh and cut directions on a stick, and let them float to sea. The boat came to land at the north of Ireland. Now there were four cows grazing at the water's edge and one of them went down to lick a brown stick lying on the beach. This cow thereafter gave three times as much milk as any other cow in Ireland "and she the leanest." The people watched to see how this cow spent the day. Immediately she began licking the stick, they were upon her and discovered the writing and instructions as to the burial of the body at Ard-macha between Patrick and Brigit. Though the people did not know the exact spot of the great ones' burial, they carried Columcille's body to Ardmacha. Then the ground opened of itself to admit the third of Ireland's great Triad. There Columcille reposes to this day.

Especially striking are two cases in which it would seem as if domestic animals were held to be united in family relation of their owners, and are made subject like them, on exceptional occasions, to penitential discipline. In *Adamnán's Second Vision*.¹⁷⁷ "Peter the Apostle, Mary the Virgin and Michael the Archangel" were taken as hostages to ward off diseases. "Now this is the lawful three days' fast which is kept to prevent the coming of the pagans, or mortality or ailment on human beings or cattle or fruits, to wit: three days (and their nights) without food for every living creature both human beings and cattle."¹⁷⁸ Though Joyce mentions¹⁷⁹ an early life of Saint Féchin in which there was a fast enjoined on every

¹⁷⁵ *Silva Gad* 2,24 (Additional).

¹⁷⁶ Lady Gregory: *Book of Saints and Wonders* 56f.

¹⁷⁷ *R C* 12.429 (from *Lebar Brecc*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 431; see p. 170f where ravens do penance.

¹⁷⁹ *Social History* 2.530.

living creature—cattle as well as people—in order to ward off the plague, it seems not to appear in the reference given.¹⁸⁰

In a number of stories animals are made to suffer to punish their owners for wilful trespass. At a word from the saint, the ringing of his bell, or his formal commination, the animals fall dead. But an animal may be punished for its own offence. Thus a cow attempting to disregard the barrier separating the cows and calves meets with death.¹⁸¹ The cattle of Lugidius' mother were impounded by a man of the village because they had grazed in his field, and were released only when the woman came for them herself.¹⁸² In this general connection it may be added that animals themselves may be punished by regular legal process, as responsible for injury done, the identity of those responsible being determined by ordeal. If an animal of several herds did any mischief, lots were cast to find out the herd, then lots to find the particular animal. The owner was then assessed by the *brehon*.¹⁸³ The *Laws* also record a fine on cattle for killing "a dog of three deeds."¹⁸⁴ This need not seem so strange if one remembers the frequent cases of judicial trials and punishment of animals through succeeding centuries into modern times.

2. HORSES

The references to horses, while numerous, are much fewer than those to cattle. While commonly used by persons of rank for riding, racing, speed in war and marauding expeditions, for drawing chariots and carts and as pack-animals, one gathers the impression that their use in farm work was somewhat limited, as compared with the use of oxen.

The car or chariot, which did service both in peace and war, is frequently mentioned. It was built of wicker within a strong outer frame of wooden ribs with shafts of hardwood, often of holly. The wheels, held by lynch-pins, revolved on fixed axles.

¹⁸⁰ *RC* 12.331 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

¹⁸¹ See p. 17 and cf. *VSH* 1.77 (horses), *LS* 165, 210, 233; *Capg* 1.256 (cattle).

¹⁸² *VSH* 2.206.

¹⁸³ *Brehon Laws* 3.441f.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 339.

The chariots of princely folk, though richly ornamented with gold and silver, and having decorative awnings, sometimes of birds' wings, were none the less rough, springless vehicles, rumbling and clattering as they moved, in fact the noisier the chariot, the more distinguished the rider, the chariot under a king being noisiest of all.¹⁸⁵

Chariots of persons of high rank might have one, two or four horses. The sons of Amalgaid rode to Tara in twelve chariots.¹⁸⁶ For cruelty to his slaves, Trián, his chariot, and his charioteer, were dragged into the lake: "he will not come out of that lake until the vespers of Doomsday, and it will not be for happiness even then."¹⁸⁷ Their chariots could not save those who trespassed on the church grounds of Sechnall to hold a fair. On their disregarding commands to leave, "the earth swallowed up twelve chariots of them."¹⁸⁸ Chariots were not for humble folk. When Brigit's Druid father could no longer tolerate the girl's excessive generosity to the poor, he said to her, "Not for honor or reverence to thee art thou carried in the chariot, but to take thee to sell thee."¹⁸⁹ Patrick could contrast pomp with saintly humility when Laeghaire met him with horse and chariot saying "Hi in curribus et hi in equis; nos autem in nomine Domini Dei nostri magni [ficabimur]."¹⁹⁰ Many of the earlier saints, including men of highest distinction and authority made long journeys on foot, alone or with companies of disciples. But in time, Patrick, Brigit, and others, whose visitations required frequent and arduous travel, are spoken of as possessing chariots. Old age, too, might necessitate their use. Saint Brendan bade Saint Jarlath have a chariot made to use "for thou art old", prophesying "and wheresoever the two hind shafts of the chariot break, there thy resurrection will be [i. e., place of burial]."¹⁹¹ Cuchulainn's famous charioteer, Laeg, was no

¹⁸⁵ *CS* 155; *LS* 265.

¹⁸⁶ *Trip* 127.

¹⁸⁷ *Trip* 221.

¹⁸⁸ *Trip* 243.

¹⁸⁹ *LS* 187f.

¹⁹⁰ *Trip* 47; App. 455 *Lebar Brecc*.

¹⁹¹ *LS* 251, *BN nE* 2.47f.

more devoted to the hero than was Odrán to Saint Patrick. Failge Berraide boasted that he would kill Patrick because of the saint's overthrow of the idol Cenn Cruaich, Failge's god. His people hid from Saint Patrick what the pagan had vowed. One day Odrán said to his master: "Since for a long time I have been charioteering for thee, O master, O Patrick, let me today be in the chief seat, and do thou be charioteer." Thereafter the saint went into Húi Failgi, and Failge came and "gave a thrust through Odrán in the form of Patrick."¹⁹²

On occasion, miraculous chariots might appear from heaven, or horses be provided for special exigencies. A chariot came from heaven to carry Maedoc to the death-bed of the king of Carraige that the king might leave this life "triumphing over the world and the devil."¹⁹³ Likewise four chariots were sent from heaven to Patrick,¹⁹⁴ and a chariot was miraculously provided Saint Fiacc "because a beetle [*var.* 'scorpion'] had gnawed his leg so that death was nigh to him."¹⁹⁵

Many stories tell how accidents of travel are remedied by the saints' miraculous powers. Cainnech was hastening on foot to help Duke Colman. Spent with fatigue, he was offered some horses by a friendly woman on the way. Not to be outdone by this charity, the devil darkened the good woman's field so that the charioteer could not find the horses. Colman lighted it miraculously and the horses were brought, but the saint was too weak to ascend the chariot, until God lifted up the earth under his feet", and "the mud remains until this day."¹⁹⁶

A somewhat similar story is told of Saint Patrick. Owing to the darkness of the night, his charioteer could not find the horses. Patrick raised his five fingers, and they illumined the whole place "as if they were five lamps" and the horses were found at once.¹⁹⁷ On another occasion, while on his way to Munster, he seems not to have used his miraculous powers, so

¹⁹² *LS* 161; *Trip* 217f.

¹⁹³ *BN nE* 2.286.

¹⁹⁴ *Trip* 239.

¹⁹⁵ *Trip* 243; Colgan *Tr Th* 165.

¹⁹⁶ *VSH* 1.166.

¹⁹⁷ *Trip* 127.

far as a broken cross-beam was concerned. A new one made from 'sedge-wood' nearby also broke. The saint declared that no building should ever be built of the wood from that grove forever. "Even a skewer is not made of it."¹⁹⁸ One of Saint Brigit's two chariot-horses became unruly and ran away. The second horse by the hand of God was kept in the yoke, the other part remained suspended miraculously, and the great abbess proceeded to the concourse of people awaiting her.¹⁹⁹ Angels removed a great stone in the road of Patrick's chariot.²⁰⁰ Still more picturesque is the story of the little boys of Laiges who made a treacherous path for Patrick's chariot over pits of water carefully concealed by sod. "For God's sake," said the boys, "drive on your horses." Patrick, relying on God's protection, not even condemning the children for their treachery, bade his charioteers drive on, and the car passed safely over the pitfalls.²⁰¹ By some negligence, the lynch-pins had not been put through the holes at the end of the axle in Saint Columcille's chariot. Adamnán speaks of the jolting over long stretches of roads, yet by God's grace, Columcille and his driver came to no harm.²⁰² Horses go dry-shod over the sea, carrying the saint to his destination when Saint Maedoc went to seek David of Wales. An angel appeared to him saying: "Non est tibi necesse ut anime amicum habeas; amat enim te Deus, et inter te et Deum medius non erit." Thereat Maedoc returned to Hibernia.²⁰³ Again when the same saint wished to enter the land of the Desi, he came to the sea and, not having any ship, he said to his disciples: "Dimittite equos. Potens est enim Deus vndam facere siccam sub pedibus eorum." After this the horses crossed dry-shod. Not even the reins of their bridles were touched by the sea.²⁰⁴ In still another tale, Maedoc's horses were guided by divine hands. The holy man desired to go to Cashel, but his

¹⁹⁸ *Trip* 195.

¹⁹⁹ *Boll* 1 Feb 137.

²⁰⁰ *Trip* 237.

²⁰¹ *Trip* 187f.

²⁰² Adamn 101f; O'Donnell, *Manus: Betha Colaim Chille* 323; cf. *CS* 159.

²⁰³ *VSH* 2,148, 300.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 148.

horses "itenere immobiles steterunt, secundum exemplum asine Balaam." An angel of the Lord appeared and bade him change his course and proceed to Connaught to Guaire Aedne, the King, who was dangerously ill. "Dimitte equos quocumque velint ire," said Maedoc. "Qui statim ad aquilonem currum verterunt. Cumque venissent ad stagnum Dergirt, equi sub curru per aquam siccis pedibus quasi per aridam Dei virtute transierunt." ²⁰⁵

While there are several references to the grazing of horses, there are none to their being herded in droves or tended like cattle at pasture. Mention of their pasturage is confined to stories of resentment when persons of princely rank impose the pasturing or maintenance of their horses upon the monastery fields, as persons of power sometimes did, as tribute exacted from their weaker neighbors by customary obligation or by force. Scannlán, king of Ulaid, came with his army to Bangor and put the royal horses into the meadow watched by Findchua in Saint Comgall's school. Though it seems to have been a legal obligation to keep kings' horses, yet the lad, after driving them away thrice, turned them into stones, the field being henceforth called Gort na Liac ('Field of the Flagstones'). The king demanded an explanation from Comgall, the master of the school. Findchua, when he saw the king's wrath with his eyes "in his head ensanguined", made the earth to rise knee-high around him. Comgall chided his pupil, whereat Findchua was ashamed and "hid his head in Comgall's cowl and burnt the cowl." The young monk was placated only when Comgall gave him award, namely "the seven milch cows" given to Comgall himself every year "until the end of thirty years . . . and the abbacy of Bangor", and if he went elsewhere "half of that due him and the other half thereof here." Findchua was "thankful for that, and put away the earth from the king." But all Comgall's cowl was burnt "wherefore it is not lawful for Comgall's successor to wear a cowl." ²⁰⁶

Likewise when Brendan went into Connaught, he found that the king's chariot horses were put to graze in his fields. Bren-

²⁰⁵ *CS* 479; *VSH* 2.155f, 306.

²⁰⁶ *LS* 233.

dan without more ado, used them to carry materials for the building of his church. The king was furious, and threatened to kill the saint, but, being divinely warned, gave him the island and the horses instead."²⁰⁷ The wealthy Dáire refused to give Saint Patrick a place for his church on the hill, though he said the saint was free to build in the valley. Patrick built his cell there and bided his time. When the king's horses were sent to graze in the cleric's field, "Patrick was angered thereby and slew the horses straightway." Dáire was enraged, and ordered the saint to be killed, but "illness and sudden colic" seized the monarch. At the petition of the queen, Saint Patrick relented and sent holy water to be sprinkled over the king himself and the horses. "Thus it was done and Dáire and his horses straightway arose."²⁰⁸ Saint Senán who was carried to Iniscathy on a flagstone by angels and set down on a high hill, Ard-na-n-Aingel ("the Angels' Height"), defied the king of the island, the famous MacTail. "Let not my horses be injured by thee," the king told Senán, who replied "'Tis not I that shall be thy horse-keeper!" None the less, the king insisted on leaving his horse with the saint, and the animals were swallowed up in Fán na n-Ech ('the Slope of the Horses') on the west of Iniscathy.²⁰⁹ Féchín was sent to keep the meadows which had been stripped bare by the grazing of horses and cattle. In spite of the saint's command, the king's horses and herds were put in. Féchín rang his bell at them and "they found death therewith." The king repenting, Féchín restored the animals to life.²¹⁰ Cuchulain's horse was fed on corn, which was evidently the staple food for horses of the noble. Lugaid the Breasted, king of Raithlenn sent his race-horse to be fed on corn by Senán because that saint had refused to pay taxes to an earthly king. The sensitive animal was put into the refectory pool to be washed. It was drowned, nothing but its leg or "cara" to be seen above the pool, which was called henceforth 'Inis Cara'.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ *BN nE* 2.84, 336.

²⁰⁸ *Trip* 229, App 473 *Lebar Brecc*; *Jocelyn* 215; *LS* 165.

²⁰⁹ *Boll* 1 Mar 764, 773; *LS* 213, 216.

²¹⁰ *Boll* 2 Jan. 694; *VSH* 2.77; *RC* 12.349 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

²¹¹ *LS* 210.

There are several references to the use of horses as pack animals or for drawing carts. "A car horse or a horse of burden" was thus differentiated in the *Brehon Laws*.²¹² Casual references are one hundred horse-loads of rods for the building of Kildare.²¹³ Brigit called two horses from the mountains to help a poor man with his burdens,²¹⁴ and the horse-drawn carts bringing food to Columbanus referred to below.²¹⁵ The "two nags" stolen by two brothers from Patrick,²¹⁶ and Columcille's old white horse that wept his approaching death, appear to have been used for farm-work. A horse carrying pails of milk became unruly on the way from pasture and spilled the milk. An angel helped Molua fill the pails with water; the horse carried them quickly to the monastery, and the miraculous milk was found to have the "flavor of sweet honey and the aroma of strong wine."²¹⁷ Sétna sent Patrick a horse-load of wheat. A grain fell to the ground and the horse lay down, refusing to go till Patrick came.²¹⁸

Horses seem to have been used for ploughing much less often than oxen, which would be far more useful in breaking land still rough, or traversing bog. Ciarán, however, is said to have had in his stable "fifty tame horses for tilling and ploughing the ground."²¹⁹ The story has been told above how Ciarán gave one of the plough-oxen to a beggar, and used his uncle's horse, promising "cras habebis boues sufficienter", which duly arrived, four in number.²²⁰ The dramatic story of Cronán's ploughing is interesting in particular for its statement: "Veris tempore, cum fratres sancti Cronani equum uel boues quibus potuissent semen proiectum in agro humo tegere, non haberent, ipse pater sanctus Cronanus trahens supra vires octamen cepit humo tegere semen." Then the Lord took pity on Cronan and

²¹² 5.407.

²¹³ *LS* 194.

²¹⁴ *Boll* 1 Feb. 122.

²¹⁵ See p. 58.

²¹⁶ *Trip* 241.

²¹⁷ *Boll* 1 Aug. 346.

²¹⁸ *Trip* 241.

²¹⁹ *Félz* 89.

²²⁰ *VSH* 1.203.

caused the two horses of the king of Themorie, evidently high-mettled steeds used to the chariot, to come of themselves for the ploughing. The charioteers of the horses came and returned them to the king. A second time the horses found their way to holy Cronán, whereupon the king hearing this, gave them to the monks as a gift. "Videns vir sanctus hoc donum Dei esse, gratias egit Saluatori." ²²¹

The unruliness of horses, especially when "wild", that is, unbroken or partially broken, is sometimes referred to, as in the case of cattle. There were, probably, horses, as well as cattle, quite wild in the hills, but domestic animals also seem to have been let run wild, when there was no likelihood of loss, and brought in as needed. Cuchulain, it may be remembered, subdued on the spot the horses of Murthimini, and the saints likewise are constantly rendering "domesticos et mites" horses that are wild. Brigit loaned two horses from her chariot. While she and her maidens waited their return, a man gave her two untamed horses. When harnessed to the chariot "domestici facti sunt." ²²² A poor man begged his two chariot horses from Cainnech when the saint was returning from the curing of Duke Albeus. The holy old man unhesitatingly gave the beggar his dole, and in the horseless chariot waited the Lord's providence. "Sanctus autem sedens in via caneabat psalmos." Thus Duke Albeus found him. "Cur ibi sedes? et vbi sunt equi currus tui?" Then the duke said, "De equis meis in montanis locis habitantibus adducantur tibi duo optimi." These horses that were "indomiti et feri", when they are harnessed to Cainnech's chariot became "mites . . . ac domiti." ²²³

Admiration of the beauty of horses as regards coloring and marking is evidenced in the *Lives*; there is the same delight in the beauty of fine horses, especially their coloration and artificial adornments, found so frequently in secular literature, and in particular in connection with the horses from the other world to be treated below. A horse of wondrous beauty "admirande pulchritudinis equus colore glaucus" is given to Saint Boecius

²²¹ *V S H* 2.25.

²²² *Capg* 1.155.

²²³ *V S H* 1.155.

in place of the one he had given to a leper.²²⁴ When Maedoc gave Saint Colmán his own horse, it was replaced by “*unus equus jacinttini coloris, a Deo missus, currui sancti Moedoc mitissime se subdidit.*”²²⁵ So fond were the ancient Irish of color that they dyed horses and pet animals to suit their taste. White horses with red ears, their long tails dyed purple, seem to have been favorites, especially with royalty. Red Conall’s horses were white with crimson manes and tails.²²⁶ When Vullneus, prior to Melrose abbey, came to commend himself to Saint Malachy’s prayers, he bestowed on the saint his own riding horse, deploring the fact that it was not worthy of Malachy’s acceptance. The saint accepted the gift with the same goodwill with which it was offered. For nine years the animal served him and, from a rather untractable beast, became mild and gentle. Moreover, this change was made more noticeable by the fact that the horse from somewhat black became all white and grew whiter as the years went on.²²⁷ Particular value seems to attach to foreign steeds. After Findchua had healed Cairthenn the Fair, and Cairthenn the Brown and the other chiefs of the Munstermen, they ordained his dues to him “fifty foreign steeds out of Húi Toirdelbaig, and fifty bugle-horns out of Húi Caissín and fifty silver pails from the nobles of Dál Cais.”²²⁸

The saints’ sympathy with the suffering of brute animals is seen in the tender healing of the broken foot of a chariot horse by Saint Fintan, so that the animal drew the chariot up the mountain without difficulty.²²⁹ *Laws*²³⁰ against misuse of horses go beyond the mere preservation of their value; their owners themselves are enjoined against inhuman treatment. Whips, it may be mentioned here were not used, but wooden goads. Saint Patrick once set his goad in the ground and it became a bush.²³¹

²²⁴ *V S H* 1.91.

²²⁵ *C S* 486.

²²⁶ *Silva Gad* 2.25 (*Additional*).

²²⁷ *C S* 592f.

²²⁸ *L S* 241.

²²⁹ *C S* 315.

²³⁰ *Senchus Mór* 1.165, 169, 185, 235.

²³¹ *Trip* 159.

Stories of the bringing to life of dead horses parallel those of cattle. Maedoc restored Saint Colmán's horse;²³² Mochuda, the king's chariot horses, and his queen and son as well,²³³ while Lasrian revived the horse of Edan, driven from his kingdom, the horse having become "*nimia dieta extinctum*."²³⁴ The horse of Aengus son of Crimlithanus had died, at which the prince grieved exceedingly. In a dream "*vir splendidus*" appeared to him and bade him seek the aid of the little lad Ciarán (Cluain). Aengus did so, and, as the dream had foretold, the boy-saint poured water into the mouth and on the face of the dead horse and it rose from the dead.²³⁵

Gifts of horses as alms or tribute parallel those of cattle, and as in that case lepers are frequently the recipients. Thus Saint Buite, as in a story just told; Eoghan who receives from Saint Capri two to replace those given to a leper; Brigit who, besought by two lepers, gives them her chariot and horses at once.²³⁶ Ciarán of Cluain was so generous to the poor that the brothers could not abide his charity fearing it would impoverish them. One day when he was sowing seed in a field, there came to him a poor man asking alms. "*In illa hora currus cum duobus equis a quodam domino, id est filio Crimthanni, sancto Kiarano oblatus est; quos equos cum curru sanctus Kiaranus illi pauperi dedit.*" It was the last straw. The brothers begged Ciarán to leave them.²³⁷ Ciarán of Cluain again was sowing seed in his field. He threw a handful of seed into the bosom of a poor man asking for alms. The grain turned to gold. Aengus, son of Crimthann, gave a chariot and two horses to Ciarán. These he gave the man for the return of the gold, and lo! the gold changed again into grain.²³⁸

It was Findchua who gave the Connaught men victory over the foreigners from the East, the men giving him tribute and

²³² *V S H* 2.310.

²³³ *V S H* 1.183.

²³⁴ *C S* 796.

²³⁵ *V S H* 1.201; *L S* 265.

²³⁶ *Capg* 1.155.

²³⁷ *V S H* 1.209.

²³⁸ *L S* 274.

dues as well, a horse by every gentleman, and a screbal (seven pennies in gold) by every one, and "the king of Connaught's raiment from crown to ground every year."²³⁹

Horses' labor, too, is given as alms. Saint Brigit loaned her two chariot horses to a man carrying heavy weights. The saint and her maidens sat down to wait his return. A man passing by gave Brigit two untamed horses which when harnessed to the chariot acted as if they had always been used to the yoke.²⁴⁰ Ailill was compelled to give alms to Saint Brigit, even one hundred horse-loads of rods for the building of Kildare, because of his niggardliness in responding to her request for charity.²⁴¹

The slaying of horses or their miraculous change into stones because of trespass has already been exemplified in the stories of Patrick, Senán, Findchua and Féchin. The horses of Duke Tedbe devastating the country, were made immovable. "Let us go quickly," Tedbe said, "before Bishop Aed comes." Both horses and men were rendered immovable, till the marauders repented.²⁴²

The horse of the magus Collis was also rendered immovable when the irate druid went to extinguish the paschal fire kindled by Saint Gerald of Mayo.²⁴³ Likewise the feet of Red Conall's horses were made fast at "the steding-oak" when he, too, would quench the fire of Molaisse of Devenish.²⁴⁴ A certain Willimarus promised a horse and two oxen to the church of Saint Gall if he were cured of an illness. He brought the horse to the cell of the saint, but after all had gone, he proved false to his vow and retained the horse; but in spite of whip and spur the animal could not be moved. Seeing this, the company with him wondered, until the man confessed that he had been unfaithful to his vow. They all returned to the church, the horse going with them without let or hindrance. This was done through the merits of Saint Gall, even after his work on earth was ended.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ *L S* 241f.

²⁴⁰ *Capg* 1.155.

²⁴¹ *Boll* 1 Feb. 126.

²⁴² *Boll* 10 Nov. 515, 523; *V S H* 1.40.

²⁴³ *V S H* 2.111f.

²⁴⁴ *Silva Gad* 2.25 (*Additional*).

²⁴⁵ Migne, P. L. 114, Walahfrid Strabo, *Life of Saint Gall* 1011.

In Brigit's controversy with Ailill told above, his horses were struck down on his refusal to loan his chariots, rising only on his promise to furnish the hundred load of rods.²⁴⁶ Snow shoulder-high killed every horse of every carriage of the men of Ireland because the king had deprived Féchin of his land.²⁴⁷ The earth swallowed up another king's two horses because he refused land to Aidan. One of them was restored but the other remained in the earth and a lake was formed on the spot: "Stagnum Gabre vocatur."²⁴⁸

Stolen horses are the subject of familiar type-stories: Mochta of Louth and his company of monks, tied their horses to the trees, when they rested for the night. Bandits stole the horses and though they rode all night, the robbers found themselves at dawn only a few paces from the sleeping brethren. Moreover, they were fast bound to their saddles, until Mochta released them.²⁴⁹ Horse thieves after wandering all night, found themselves still at the gate of Saint Boethius' Monastery in the morning.²⁵⁰ The very human story of Erc's stealing of Patrick's horse is hardly according to type. Saint Patrick had come into Cashel to meet Aengus, king of Munster, and Ciarán the Elder joined them there. Erc of Ossory stole the horse on which Patrick rode. For some unaccountable reason, Erc was a favorite of Ciarán's, and he gave a weight of gold for his release. No sooner had the king received the gold than it vanished, for it was "phantom gold".²⁵¹ The *Tripartite Life* gives another story of Patrick's horses being stolen by the sons of Erc. Bishop Maine sought Patrick to forgive the brethren, he "washed Patrick's feet with his hair and tears, and drove the horses into the meadow and cleansed their hooves in honor of Patrick."²⁵² Four other persons in the south stole Patrick's horses. The saint forgave them and blessed the hands of Aed

²⁴⁶ *L S* 194.

²⁴⁷ *R C* 12,350 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. Whitley Stokes).

²⁴⁸ *Boll* 4 Nov. 506; *V S H* 1.36.

²⁴⁹ *Boll* 3 Aug. 745.

²⁵⁰ *V S H* 1.90.

²⁵¹ *Trip* 109; *B N nE* 2.102.

²⁵² *Trip* 145.

his groom, called 'Hand-Aed' thereafter.²⁵³ A thief stole a horse and bridle from Saint Lasrian, but returned them when he believed the soldiers of King Cairelli pursued him.²⁵⁴ A brother of the monastery of Saint Gall stole a horse and escaped. Coming to the river Reno, he could not find the ford, and returned quickly to the monastery; the second night he made another attempt, and the same thing happened. The third night he still persisted. Wearied out, he slept. Those who knew the horse took it back to its place. The brother himself, conquered by the power of the saint's virtues, was led back to the monastery. Thus it was with all who fled the saint's "familia"; they either repented or underwent punishment, that the faith of the others would not suffer.²⁵⁵

Horse flesh seems not to have been eaten by the ancient Irish, and when it was, it would seem to be a sign of reproach or a curse for wickedness, probably because associated with heathen practice. When Columcille came to Hinba Island, he directed an indulgence of food for the penitents there. One among them Neman, son of Cathair, refused to accept the proffered indulgence. Columcille thereupon prophesied: "A time will come when thou wilt secretly eat mare's flesh in a wood with robbers." The man after having returned to the world was found eating such food in the manner foretold.²⁵⁶ After Crumthir Caelan killed his plough-ox for Saint Enda's entertainment, the saint prophesied that one layman who refused to break his abstinence would eat the flesh of mad horses and would strangle.²⁵⁷ In the story told of the lay brother who would not eat bacon for the same reason, Saint Ciarán prophesied that he would eat "carnem de asina".²⁵⁸ Horse flesh as food is again mentioned in a legend of Saint Moling who found in a cauldron of a poor woman wishing to entertain him only a horse-steak which he blessed and it turned into "a quarter of mutton".²⁵⁹

²⁵³ *Trip* 201.

²⁵⁴ *CS* 792.

²⁵⁵ *Boll* 7 Oct. 905.

²⁵⁶ *Adamn* 27.

²⁵⁷ *VSH* 2.73.

²⁵⁸ *VSH* 1.229; *BNnE* 2.110.

²⁵⁹ *RC* 27.293 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

Legends of occult powers, or obedience to celestial commands or guidance, are perhaps the most highly imaginative of all. Of the holy Tigernacus this eulogy was made by Doachus whom the saint had raised from the dead: "Tigernacus in terra, Tigernacus in celo; hoc est in terra, corpore; in celo, animo et conuersacione."²⁶⁰ Doachus had been overtaken by death on his way to Tigernach, who by the spirit of God knew this. He told the charioteer to harness the horses to the car but on no account to open his eyes until he had been given leave. The saint knew also by God's power, the chariot would be led by angels. The charioteer, disobeying the saint's command opened his eyes, whereupon one burst. Tigernach blessed it with the sign of the cross, the picture of which remained in the man's eye until death. The chariot, angel-guided, reached the dead archbishop, and at Tigernach's prayer he was restored to life, uttering the eulogy written above. The horses of holy Maedoc "in itinere immobiles steterunt, secundum exemplum asine Baalam", when he wished to enter Munster. An angel bade him go to cure Aed Guaire in Connacht, whereupon the charioteer released the horses and they, unguided, brought the saint to the king.²⁶¹ Wagons that were bringing food to Columbanus and his companions were drawn miraculously through unknown roads to the saint.²⁶² At least three times the chariot of Saint Aidan was transported through the air: once from one part of the plain to another, a second time for a long distance during which ride the charioteer was told not to open his eyes. The man disobeyed, and was blinded, but his sight was restored by the saint. A third time the horses and chariot were raised in the air, and transported that the saint might overtake some thieves. The leaders were unable to raise hand or foot. They repented and became penitent monks under Aidan.²⁶³

Close sympathy between men and animals is nowhere better seen than in the story of the old white horse of Iona. Saint

²⁶⁰ *V S H* 2.266f.

²⁶¹ *V S H* 2.155, 306.

²⁶² Migne, P. L.: 87; Jonas' "Life of Columbanus," *Translations and Reprints* 2, Nos. 7-8.

²⁶³ *Boll* 4 Nov. 510, 514, 515.

Columcille, knowing that his end was near, went with his faithful attendant Diarmuit to bless the granary. Returning to the monastery, the old man sat down "at the half way", in which place a "cross still standing . . . is seen on the side of the road".²⁶⁴ Let Adamnán tell the rest in his own words: "And while the Saint . . . sat down for a while and rested in that place, behold! there comes up to him the white horse that faithful servant . . . that used to carry the milk-pail between the cow-pasture and the monastery. This creature then coming up to the Saint, wonderful to say, putting his head in his bosom as I believe under the inspiration of God, in whose sight every animal is endowed with the sense of things, because the Creator Himself has so ordered it; knowing that his master would soon depart from him, and that he would see his face no more, began to utter plaintive moans, and as if a man, to shed tears in abundance into the saint's lap, and so to weep, frothing greatly. Which when the attendant saw he began to drive away the weeping mourner; but the Saint forbade him, saying 'Let him alone! As he loves me, so let him alone. That into this bosom of mine he may pour out the tears of his most bitter lamentation. Behold! thou, even seeing thou art a man, and hast a rational soul, couldest in no way know anything about my departure except what I myself have lately shown thee; but to this brute animal, destitute of reason, in what way soever the Maker Himself hath willed He hath revealed that his master is about to go away from him. And so saying, he blessed his sorrowing servant, the horse, then turning about to go away from him.'" ²⁶⁵ Manus O'Donnell ²⁶⁶ notes that because of Columcille's blessing "the nag mended and did more service for the brethren the while he lived than did other nags a great number." The legend sends the mind back to still more ancient sagas, to the hero-stories of Achilles' swift-footed Xanthus shedding tears at the hero's approaching fate, of the "grey of Macha" that laid its head upon the breast of Cuchulain weeping the death of the

²⁶⁴ A cross of very ancient date, "MacLean's Cross" in Iona, is said to be the same. Leahy, E., *Life of Columcille* 21.

²⁶⁵ Adamn 133; *Boll* 2 Junii 99.

²⁶⁶ *Betha Colaim Chille*, 409f.

Red Branch Champion on the eve of his last battle, and forward to the late eighteenth century to the story of the war-horse of the son of Edmund Burke, mourning the death of his master (killed in the Napoleonic wars) on the breast of the great Irish orator himself.²⁶⁷

There is no direct mention of the ass or donkey, except in *Brendan*²⁶⁸ where the saint prophesies that a 'conversus' would eat the flesh of "iumentis lactantis pullum" in the woods; in Ciarán,²⁶⁹ in which that saint also prophesies that a lay-brother who had refused to partake of the general fare would eat "carnem de asina", and in the story of Berach's deer upon whose back he placed his burdens as "super domesticum asinum".²⁷⁰ The mule is not mentioned, though the primitive Celts are tentatively credited with having had a mule deity.

J. G. O'Keefe²⁷¹ tells the story of the translation of Guaire's cauldron to satisfy the hunger of Saint Colmán and his clerk who had lived in the forest fasting on watercress, water, and herbs, but the legend has grown in popular tradition to a story of amusing details. The bowl of Guaire travelled the five miles from Durlus to the wilderness, while the king and his warriors galloped after it. Upon the arrival of the king and his warriors the clerk who had gone at the food voraciously was afraid. Whereupon Saint Colmán prayed "and horsemen and horses remained immovable". When the clerk had finished, the warriors advanced and asked the Saint's blessing, who invited them to stay to dinner.²⁷²

From popular tradition also comes the story of Saint Maedoc's (Saint Mogue's) meeting with a woman of red hair, the first person met early on Friday morning, a conjunction exceedingly disastrous to anyone. Saint Maedoc set to work at sunset to build the cathedral at Ferns, and at dawn the walls were up to the very eaves. He and his horse were coming down Slieve

²⁶⁷ O'Connor, W. A.: *History of the Irish People* 23.

²⁶⁸ *V S H* 1.146.

²⁶⁹ *V S H* 1.229f; *B N nE* 2.110.

²⁷⁰ *V S H* 1.79.

²⁷¹ *Ériu* 1.47 (from *Yellow Book of Lecan*).

²⁷² Wright, Thomas, *History of Ireland* 31.

Buidh with the last load of stones for the building. Alas, a red-haired woman put her head out of the window! "Och, Saint Mogue, asthore, is that all you done the whole night?" Saint Maedoc was so troubled he never laid another hand to the building and the old white horse tossed the stones to the side of the road where they can be seen yet on the slope facing Ferns. Twenty men would not move the heap.²⁷³

3. SHEEP

The references to sheep, while fewer in number than those to cattle and horses, amply illustrate the importance of sheep in primitive Irish life. The *Brehon Laws*²⁷⁴ rather quaintly term them "the weakest cattle of the tribe—the sheep."

It would seem idle to speculate regarding the question to what strain or strains the sheep in primitive Ireland belonged, whether possibly to some early variety of the 'long-wooled', 'down', or 'mountain' strains into which the many widely differentiated developed breeds are loosely classified. The question must, however, at least suggest itself even though it remains unanswered, because of a striking story which follows. We can gather from the *Lives* evidence that there were white sheep and black sheep, or at least sheep with black markings; sheep with horns and hornless; sheep domesticated, and sheep half-wild or wholly wild, living on the hills. But how do these characteristics match up as to the value of the animals possessing them?

It seems plain in the first place that white sheep are regarded as specially to be valued. When, in the *Lives*, sheep are naturally said to be 'white', one takes it for granted as a redundant epithet, because one is so apt to think of sheep as white, whereas in reality it asserts the sheep in question to have been of superior quality. Thus the miraculous sheep given Brigit were white.²⁷⁵ So also those sent to Ciarán of Saighir.²⁷⁶ The lamb chosen by Brendan for sacrifice from the marvelous flocks he came upon,

²⁷³ Kennedy, P., *Legends of Mount Leinster* 186f.

²⁷⁴ 5.471.

²⁷⁵ *C S* 246.

²⁷⁶ *Boll* 1 Mar. App 395; *V S H* 1.222; *Silva Gad* 2.6 (from *Codex Kilkeniensis* John Colgan).

“*ita magne sicut boues*”, was ‘*immaculata*’ indicating its whiteness as well as its symbolic perfection for the sacrifice.²⁷⁷ Indeed all these ‘*diuersae greges*’ were “*albi coloris in tanta multitudine ita ut uix possint pre densitate gregum terram conspiciere*”.

On the other hand, black wool was apparently, in the 12th century at least, the more general wear in cloth made from undyed wool as the sheep were chiefly of that color, as will appear below. It was therefore, cheaper than white wool. But more than this, black wool is characteristically inferior to white in fineness and length of staple. Also, it might be associated with the wild or half-wild sheep of the hills, and black sheep might prove untamed and troublesome when the wild strain evidenced itself in color in domesticated flocks. That wild sheep existed in Ireland as in Wales and the Highlands may be inferred from the passage in Brendan’s life just referred to. That the ‘*immaculate*’ lamb chosen by Brendan followed the brother charged with the sacrifice “*quasi domestica ouis*” must not be taken to mean simply a contrast between that wonderful flock and ordinary domestic animals; it implies that a sheep not domesticated would not be expected to follow in docile fashion. Also, in the striking story above alluded to and which now follows, the king came to his death through a sheep evidently untended and probably wild, on the track beneath the cliff. This story is of exceptional interest as clearly indicating the inferiority of the black in contrast with the white strains.

Saint Senán, after he had expelled the monster from the lake at Iniscathy, caused offence to MacTail, King of Húi Fígent by taking up his abode there. The king was determined to eject the saint. His son bade him beware lest the saint wreak his vengeance. The king answered, “I do not value him more than a bald (*calvus*, i. e. hornless) sheep!”—or as the *Book of Lismore* has it, “hornless swarthy sheep”. These words spelled his doom. Going his way “in wrath and pride” beside a cliff in the north of the district of Baiscenn, there started up under the horses’ hooves a hornless swarthy sheep, making a great

²⁷⁷ *V S H* 1.111f.

stumbling under his chariot in such wise that with the plunging of the horses MacTail was pitched out against a stone and killed.²⁷⁸

There can be no question as to the king's opinion of the inferiority of the black sheep, however much pungent rhetoric went into the epithets 'hornless' and 'black' in equating the sheep with the saint. The *Lismore* epithet 'swarthy' seems to provide a striking background, however remote, for our proverbial use of "black sheep", "a black sheep in every flock", "the black sheep of the family". We may leave it to the naturalist or the sheep-breeder to decide whether the sheep the king knew was really black as well as hornless, or in that point was more rhetorical than accurate. Various black breeds of recent times, wild or domesticated, or black in spots, may be either horned or hornless.

The stories concerning sheep fall under much the same general types as those concerning cattle, as regards herding, separation of lambs and ewes during weaning, miraculous increase of flocks, bestowal as gifts or alms, cases of theft, use in providing food. Certain special points demand attention, however, and certain stories seem worth telling because of their general interest apart from their incidental mention of sheep.

While Lugid, the future saint Molua, was tending his father's sheep, a storm put out the fire the herds had built. Lugid took up one of the dead embers in his hand and behold, an angel came and kindled it. The flame arose and, applied to the dead embers of the fire, the blaze thereof warmed Lugid and his fellow-herds. The fire was divided among all the people of the neighborhood.²⁷⁹ Again while herding, Lugid fell asleep. Rushes near him took fire just as Comgall and his monks were passing. One of the brothers found the sleeping lad and brought him safe to the abbot. Comgall looked upon the lad and loved him, and received him as his disciple at Benchor. Plainly he was marked for sainthood. On a certain day, "invenit Congallus angelum juxta Puerum, qui litteras explanabat Puero, et docebat eum, et leniter consolabatur illum."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ *Boll* 1 Mar. 764f, 773f; *L S* 216f.

²⁷⁹ *Boll* 1 Aug. 344.

²⁸⁰ *Boll* 1 Aug. 346.

Here also appears the theme of the boy-herd bestowing his parents' property in charity, the loss being miraculously restored. Seven (or four) sheep are given to poor folk by Saint Coemgen. "Cetera autem quibus corruscaverit annis puerilis teneritudinis, preter unum, silemus. Aliquando puer, cum pastoribus parentum pascens greges, pauperibus quibusdam elimosynam ab eo pro Deo petentibus. vij tradidit oves; sed grex in consueto numero repertus est. Ob hec et hujusmodi sanctis senioribus Eugenio, Lochurano et Eanne a parentibus, ut ad cultum Dei nutritetur, traditus est. Puer vero cotidie litterarum simul ac virtutum incrementis proficiebat."²⁸¹ When the great abbot Comgall came to the house of Mochua's father, he saw a train of angels above it. The saint asked Becan how many sons he had, who replied, "Two who are to be counted . . . and a little lame child who is with the sheep, and he is not to be counted." Comgall desired to see the boy, declaring that "the grace of the Holy Ghost (was) in his company." He took the little lame one with him to the great monastery of Bangor, in which place, "while still a youth, he wrought miracles and marvels".²⁸²

This same Mochua of Balla was bidden to keep the lambs from the ewes. "On a certain time of summer, Mochua was put to guard the lambs. Howbeit he was repeating his Beatus while with them. The lambs ran together towards their dams, for there was no fence between them. Mochua came and drew his crozier between them after him on the earth; and not a lamb of the lambs ventured to cross the trace of the crozier, but each of them stood looking at the other over the line."²⁸³

Two separate points attract attention here. The herding of sheep was apparently more reputable than the herding of goats or swine, while apparently less so than the herding of cattle, or, *a fortiori*, horses. This delicate punctilio appears most clearly in a story of Saint Fintan in which goats are made to appear as cows: "Quodam tempore Fintanus erat in scolis sancti Comgalli; qui quodam die jussit ei ut suas capras pasceret. Quod

²⁸¹ *Boll* 1 Junii 305; *CS* 835f; *VS H* 1.235; *BN nE* 2.157.

²⁸² *LS* 282.

²⁸³ *LS* 288.

officium minime honestum Fintanus reputans, oravit ut capre verterentur in boves, quod et factum est.”²⁸⁴ So likewise Molua’s herd of swine is made to appear as sheep: “Quadam quoque die erat Lugidius (Molua) cum ceteris pueris custodientes sues: cumque sues longius ab eis recederent, unus de pueris vicissim exhibat, et sues ut grex ovium videbantur a turba hominum quae prope stabat; quia Lugidius ovis innocens erat, et pastor ovium postea fieret.”²⁸⁵ Here the scribe not appreciating the original reason for the miracle has given it a homiletic twist of his own. It would even appear that a change in the animal herded might be made by a scribe who was sensitive to such snobbish distinctions. Such a case is noted by Plummer²⁸⁶ where in the story of Molua’s herding given above Molua was keeping “sues” according to S², but S¹ and R have altered ‘sues’ to ‘oues’.²⁸⁷ Plummer feels it is for the same reason that goats are turned into kine.²⁸⁸

A second point of some interest is the fact that in the case of sheep, we find a number of stories in which sheep are herded by women. This is in marked contrast with the stories concerning cattle. One story only speaks of women as in charge of cattle, and at that not cattle in general, but the cows with the calves. The passage reads, “Quadam autem die quedam mulieres, in vicino loco habitantes, Lugidum videre volentes, vitulos suos sub vaccas reliquerunt, elevatisque vocibus clamaverunt, quasi vitulos a vaccis segregare voluissent.”²⁸⁹ One may assume that the women would herd cattle when gentle, in small numbers, or near home, as when engaged in milking, or the like, but that they might well tend smaller animals like sheep or goats frequently. The fact recorded concerning Lugidus (Molua) that he took himself off at the sound of a bell fearing he might meet with a woman would accord well with sheep or goats in a woman’s charge whether single animals or herds having belled leaders.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ *C S* 227.

²⁸⁵ *Boll* 1 Aug. 344; *C S* 262f.

²⁸⁶ *V S H* lxcvi n4.

²⁸⁷ *V S H* 2.210.

²⁸⁸ See above.

²⁸⁹ *C S* 271.

²⁹⁰ *C S* 273.

"In hoc loco non ero. Ubi enim fuerit ovis, ibi erit mulier; et ubi fuerit mulier, ibi peccatum; ubi vero peccatum, ibi erit dyabolus; et ubi dyabolus, ibi infernus erit." ²⁹¹

Sheep are listed among the animals appropriated to the possession of women in the *Brehon Laws* as given in the following passages: ²⁹² "For there is no possession-taking by women but of sheep, i. e., for there is nothing lawful for the women i. e., it is not lawful for the women to bring anything for taking possession of land except sheep and the produce of their hands. But of sheep, i. e., the first time, i. e., two sheep on the first occasion. . . . For the black and white cat i. e., the great champion which was taken from the ship of Breasal Breac in which were white-breasted cats. For the lap-dog of a queen i. e., after the foot of the queen he follows, i. e., a lap dog."

It was while herding sheep that Patrick's little sister Lupita, endeavoring to keep the lambs from the ewes, fell and cut her head against a stone. Her brother signed the wound with the cross and healed it, but the scar remained. It was by this scar that Patrick recognized his sister after many years of esparation. ²⁹³

Of special interest is the association of the great Saint Brigit with sheep and sheep-herding. We have seen her as bond-woman though of royal blood, busied with the milk and the butter, but her association with sheep continues in her legend into her later life. A charming tribute is paid her in her life in the *Book of Lismore*. ²⁹⁴ "She tended the sheep, she satisfied the birds, she fed the poor." Though a robber carried away seven wethers from the sheep Brigit was tending, the flock was complete when Dubthach and his wife counted them. ²⁹⁵ When she was abbess of Kildare she still took her turn in herding the sheep. One day she saw a scholar running by. "What makes thee so unsedate?" she asked Nindid the scholar. "I am on my way to heaven!" exclaimed the youth impulsively. "The Vir-

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* 273; cf. *V S H* 1.58; 250f, 2.216, 229.

²⁹² 1.149, 151.

²⁹³ Jocelyn 8; *L S* 151.

²⁹⁴ *P.* 185.

²⁹⁵ *L S* 197, 331 n. cited from Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum* 41.

gin's Son knoweth he is happy who goeth the journey!" the saint declared, begging the lad pray that it might be easy for her to go, too. Yielding, the boy recited with her a Pater Noster, "whence it came to pass that the comradeship of the world's scholars is with Brigit, and the Lord gives them through Brigit's prayer every perfect good they ask."²⁹⁶ Ordained priest, fore-knowing through Brigit's prophecy that he would administer Viaticum to her in her last moments, Nindid "fecit circa eam aeream arctam manicam, cum sera et clavi, ne illa corpus suum tangeret, neque de aliquo immundo tangeretur. Inde agnomen ipse habet: nam vocatur Scotice *Ninidh d Lamghlan*, quod sonat Latine *Ninidius Manus-mundae*."²⁹⁷ Again, one day, while herding sheep, a sudden shower sent Saint Brigit hurrying back to shelter, her cloak wet with the rain. The sun shone out, "Et tamquam in arbore grandi et firma in ipso tenui solari umbraculo vestis pendit".²⁹⁸ The English Aldhelm, saint and poet two hundred years after Brigit, hung his hat on a sunbeam.

As in the case of other domestic animals, sheep are miraculously sent to supply needs, or when given in charity are restored, sometimes with interest. In the truly extraordinary case of Ciarán of Saighir sheep followed on a previous gift of swine. "Iterum alia die Praepositus suus dixit S. Kierano: Oves modo non habemus, Pater, et oportet nos eas emere. Respondit ei vir sanctus: Qui nobis dedit sues, ipse dabit et oves. Et egressus Praepositus extra januam curiae, vidit ibi similiter a Domino missas viginti septem oves albas carpentes herbas; quae similiter ibi in greges creverunt."²⁹⁹ A lamb was killed for the refec-tion of Cainnech. "Iste autem femine habebant agnum separatum, bene pastum, diligenter cibatum, forma amenum, moribus jocundum," which they killed for the entertainment of the saint. The next day when Cainnech heard that the women had killed "agnum amabilem" for him, he was sad, and taking the skin of the slain lamb stretched it, and called it to him, and behold, the lamb ran to him alive and well as ever!³⁰⁰ When

²⁹⁶ *L S* 194.

²⁹⁸ *Boll* 1 Feb. 136.

³⁰⁰ *C S* 390.

²⁹⁷ *Boll* 1 Feb. 168.

²⁹⁹ *Boll* 1 Mar. App 395.

Saint Brigit made lament to Saint Ailbe "Ecce ego oves non habeo", Ailbe responded: "Esto secura; nam oves habebis." Then he prayed to the Lord, and the Lord gave her "centum oves albas", which, moreover, needed no shepherd to tend them.³⁰¹ When Brigit gave a blind boy seven rams of the flock, the number of the flock nevertheless was not diminished.³⁰²

Stories of the theft of sheep run true to familiar types. On a certain day when robbers came out of Offaly to kill the people of the district of Cenél Fiachrach, they found Ciarán with his herds reading. When they attempted to kill him, they were stricken with blindness and could not put forth hand or foot until they had done penance; "then they were loosed by God's blessing and Ciarán's."³⁰³ Thieves stole the sheep of the holy man Flannan, and repaired to the woods kindling a fire on which to cook it. "Cumque urgente fame juxta immensum ignem partem assare, partem ferventibus undis elixare carnes elaborarent, mira dicturus, nec easdem carnes assare vel aquam saltem calefacere valebant." The men returned, acknowledged their fault, and followed Flannan.³⁰⁴ The flocks of the Osraghi were saved from their plunderers when Saint Molua stood in the way before them.³⁰⁵

These stories are of stock type, but on the other hand, two are distinguished by highly picturesque details on a motive frequent and always delightful in folk-lore. Saint Coemgen taxed a stubborn thief with the theft of a ram, and the thief was prepared to swear to his innocence. "Ilico iam accedens fur ad iurandum, aries ex ore eius balando alte clamavit."³⁰⁶ Likewise in the life of Saint Moeog, when a man accused of stealing a sheep from the monastery went to take oath on the relics of the church, thus to perjure his soul, to the surprise of all, the ears of the stolen sheep made their appearance protruding from his mouth.³⁰⁷

³⁰¹ *CS* 246.

³⁰² *Capp* 1.158.

³⁰³ *LS* 267; *VSH* 1.202.

³⁰⁴ *CS* 666.

³⁰⁵ *VSH* 2.196f.

³⁰⁶ *VSH* 1.239.

³⁰⁷ *BN nE* 2.183.

The "first lamb" was given as tribute to Findchua by the Munstermen after he had gained victory in battle for them,³⁰⁸ and a white sheep was taken in part payment of rent for Findchua by the King of Munster himself.³⁰⁹

The use, still less the breeding, of sheep as milch animals, as in France, notably for the manufacture of Roquefort cheese, and in other countries, is not usual in recent years in the British Isles save in a few localities. But sheep, it would seem, were formerly quite commonly so used. That this might be the case in Ireland may perhaps appear from the following. The fabulous sheep that Brendan saw in the Earthly Paradise of their sequestered isle were, it will be remembered, as large as beeves. When the saint inquired the reason he was told, "Nemo colligit lac de ouibus in hac insula, nec hyemis tempestas eas molestat, et in pascuis semper die noctuque morantur, et ideo maiores sunt quam in uestris regionibus."³¹⁰ Moreover, in the version of the story of Brigit's guesting with Saint Lassáir³¹¹ the hostess milked her one ewe to entertain her guest.³¹²

The *Lives* seem not to mention shearing, but the shears for shearing sheep and a smaller size for other purposes were both called *demess* (two-edge).³¹³ Patrick put the "deimiss round" the hair of the druid Dubthach, that is, tonsured him; he also promised tonsure to Fiace.³¹⁴

Wool, often casually mentioned in secular literature, is spoken of but seldom, once in relation to a shipload imported from Iona to the monastery of Saint Samthann at Colptha. A great storm arose threatening to overwhelm the ship. A young brother suggested jettisoning the wool of the 'old woman', Saint Samthann. The master of the ship replied, "Immo cum lana illius anus aut uiuemus aut moriemur." He had no sooner said this than the sea became calm and the winds ceased. When the young man

³⁰⁸ *LS* 245.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* 235.

³¹⁰ *VSH* 1.112.

³¹¹ *Rawlinson B* cited *LS* 328.

³¹² *LS* 191 does not mention the milking-ewe.

³¹³ "Cormac's Glossary," *Tripartite Life*, p. 55.

³¹⁴ *Trip* 191.

said again, "Quare nunc anicula non prestat nobis uentum?", the master replied that through her merits God would send them aid. The wind filled their sails, and rowing for three days and nights they came to the port of Colptha. They proceeded to Samthann's monastery. She, with fore-knowledge of the danger through which they had come, approached the young man and said, "Quid de me locutus es in mari, cum tempestas uobis mortem minitaret?" The young brother was covered with confusion, but the saint added kindly: "Ne confundaris in hoc; set si quando angustie tibi immineant, me audacter appella."³¹⁵

The 'lend', or cloak, was commonly made of undyed wool in the natural color white or black. Giraldus says that nearly all the Irish in his time wore black, "that being the color of the sheep in this country."³¹⁶ There is no mention in the *Lives* of the processes of spinning or weaving. After the shearing, which seems to have been done by men, the whole work up to the finished cloth was specially the task of women, except the fulling. Thus the *Brehon Law* says:³¹⁷ "Distress of two days i. e., on which there is a stay of two days for the produce of the hand, for wages, for weaving, for the blessing of one woman on the work of another, for every material which is on the spindles, for the flax spinning-stick, for the wool spinning-stick, for the wool-bag, for the weaver's reed, for all the implements of weaving, . . . for the pattern of her handwork, for the wallet with its contents." The only reference in the *Lives* even remotely connected with weaving is the story of a widow who slew her only calf to entertain Saint Brigit, and cooked it with the *garmain* or larger beam of her loom, as she had no other fuel—more than amply sufficient, it would seem even if the loom were not a large one and a whole calf to be cooked, considering that the massive spear of a hero in the secular literature was sometimes compared to a weaver's beam.³¹⁸

There is no mention of sheepskins used as clothing, which doubtless may be attributed to accident. It is strange, however,

³¹⁵ *V S H* 2,259f.

³¹⁶ *Top Hib*, tr. Thomas Wright, 122.

³¹⁷ 1,151.

³¹⁸ *L S* 197, 330 n. cited from the Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum* 42.

that there should be no mention of parchment, and still more strange, especially considering the peculiar eminence of the Irish in illumination and other arts of the scriptorium, that almost no references to these found their way into the *Lives* even in the later recensions. There is a reference having to do with writing in the story of how a bird dropped an excellent feather for the purpose just as Molaisse needed a pen. There are also several references in the life of Columcille, whose skill as a scribe we shall see in his copying of Finnian's Psalter, which resulted, so his legend tells, in a clan-war.³¹⁹ The *Book of Lismore* affirms that the saint founded three hundred churches and wrote three hundred books.³²⁰ In Adamnán's *Life* Columcille's "horn of ink" was foolishly upset by a troublesome guest eager to greet the saint. A book written by Columcille lay under water for twenty days in a book-satchel and yet was found dry and no wise corrupted. A book of hymns written by the saint's own hand was likewise found clean and dry though it had lain under water from the Nativity until the end of Easter week. Adamnán writes, "But we have learned without doubt from men of experience that other like things occurred, with respect to books written by the hand of Saint Columcille, which books being immersed in water could in no way be corrupted", but of this particular book Adamnán himself received the account from "truthful, excellent, and trustworthy men" who had examined it and found it "most white and clear".³²¹ Columcille "habebat in manu sua pugillarem de quo scribebat que colore splendebat auri" when he and Ruadán fought in the air with demons for the soul of Aed. Afterwards, he gave the stylus to Ruadán, but later, being reminded, sent Baithín from Iona to Ruadán to fetch it.³²² Columcille is supposed to have visited Lon, Saint Longarad, a passionate lover of books, in order to see his collection, but Lon hid the books, whereupon Columcille prophesied that because of his inhospitality, the books could not be read by any one after their writer's death.³²³ The incident is probably

³¹⁹ See pp. 174, 177.

³²⁰ *L S* 176.

³²¹ Adamn 29, 62f; cf. O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 435.

³²² *V S H* 2.251f.

³²³ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 219; *Félz* 199.

invented by a later scribe to explain the illegibility of a number of books of the 6th century because of the wear and tear of age. Baithín, Columcille's successor, told the saint he must have a brother "run over with him and correct the Psalter" he had written. Columcille assured him he did not have to put that trouble upon the brethren for there was wanting in the whole Psalter only "the vowel 'i' ", and so it was found.³²⁴ Indeed, Columcille's life closed with his office as scribe. In the touching account one reads that after visiting the granary of the monastery and receiving the sympathy of the old white horse on his departure to the Lord, the saint returned to the monastery, and "sat down in his cell transcribing the Psalter; and coming to that last verse the thirty-third (34th) Psalm where it is written 'But they who seek the Lord shall want no manner of thing that is good,' 'Here,' he says, 'at the end of the page, I must cease. What follows let Baithene write.' " The verse was "very suitable to the saint at his departure" says his biographer and "the following verse was most suitable to his successor, 'Come, ye children, and hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord,' " for Baithín "succeeded him not only in teaching but also in transcribing".³²⁵

Mutton, as plentiful references in secular literature may prove, was held in high regard as food. It might well be that it was perhaps preferred to beef, as sheep could be so much more easily and cheaply fattened for eating, whereas the flesh of cattle except veal would usually not come from animals specially bred and fed for eating. The references to mutton in the *Lives* are, however, two only, of which one at least is noteworthy. The first tells how Brigit miraculously fed two congregations.³²⁶ "What shall we do for the multitude that has come to us?", asked Lassáir of Brigit as they saw Patrick coming to them. "What food have ye?" asked the saint. "There is naught," said Lassáir, "save one sheep, twelve loaves and a little milk." After Patrick's preaching, Brigit blessed the food and "the

³²⁴ Adamn 28f.

³²⁵ Adamn 134; cf. other saint scribes, *Boll* 1 Mar. 765; *CS* 439, 647; *VSH* 2.114f.

³²⁶ *LS* 191f.

two peoples of God, even Brigit's congregation and Patrick's congregation, were satisfied, and their leavings were much more than the material that had been there at first".

Of wholly exceptional interest is the story, how the custom of the 'Michaelmas Morsel' came about. At the time that Patrick was fasting against Laeghaire (that is, by the compulsion of his protracted fast for the purpose he was enforcing a favorable outcome of the point at issue between them), the son of Laeghaire ate of the flesh of a wether that had been poisoned and died thereby. The queen begged the saint to bring her boy back to life. Patrick's angel, Victor, advised him to go to the archangel Michael whose feast, September 29th, it was. So through Michael's power, the boy was made to live again. But Patrick therewith must give Michael alms, "the first morsel thou shalt take of the portion to bestow it on a needy pauper in God's name and Michael's, and let every monk whom thou shalt have bestow the same forever on God and Michael."³²⁷

The troop of artists that came to share Lonán's feast with Saint Patrick were refused by the host, but a certain youth named Nessán came to give Patrick a wether and cheeses, which the saint in turn gave to the satirists. The story is told more fully below.³²⁸

Before closing, one must not forget to refer to the lions tamed by Saint Brendan in Britain, which at his command acted as shepherds of sheep, "Nam sicut canes domestici apud illos pascebantur; et quasi pastores custodiebant peccora eorum".³²⁹

4. SWINE

It is somewhat strange that references to swine are comparatively few, in view of their importance in farm economy. Next to cows in value in the community and more than horses, these long-snouted, thin, spare, muscular, active swine were sometimes used as part of the tribute due to superiors or kings. Nevertheless, it would seem that the exercise of miraculous power in the case of pigs might appear to accord ill with the dignity of

³²⁷ *Trip* 559 App (*Rawlinson B*).

³²⁸ See p. 188f.

³²⁹ *V S H* 1.142.

sainthood. There is some evidence of this. We have seen that the swine herded by the youthful Molua were made to appear sheep.³³⁰ No other explanation offers for the apparently point-less miracle. If this be true, it may be due to the instinctive repugnance caused by the animals' grossness of form, greediness, indiscriminate feeding, love of wallowing, toleration of filth, despite the ready market they commanded when slaughtered and the variety of delectable food they provided. This repugnance is certainly not due to the proscription of swine as unclean by Levitical law, which did not pass into Christian acceptance or cause prejudice as to the use of pork for food.

On the other hand certain saints of great distinction are recorded as herding swine. Saint Patrick served his master Miliuc after the custom of the Hebrews and there was intrusted to him the herding of swine "in the wilderness of Slemish".³³¹ Mochuta, too, herded swine. "Et, sicut David oues patris sui pascēbat, ita beatus Mochutu sues patris sui in puericia cum aliis subuleis custodiebat."³³² This same Mochuta herding his swine by the river Mainne heard the Duke of Chiaraigi approaching. The lad found favor with the duke who bade him come with the other swineherds to the castle every day, and honor would be given them because of Mochuta. The duke's wife Noeleathan asked him why he gazed so intently at the herd-boy when each evening Mochuta sat before him. The duke replied, "Video enim munile aureum, mirabiliter factum, circa collum eius; et columnam igneam a capite eius usque ad celum. Et uideo domum reseratam sursum, quasi culmen non haberet." Henceforth Mochuta sometimes herded his swine in the woods and sometimes remained at the castle with the duke.³³³ One day while herding for the duke, Mochuta heard the "senior episcopus Carthagus" and his companions come singing psalms. Mochuta followed the company to the monastery and sitting down at the door listened to the singing. Though the duke offered him a weapon, clothes, and rich gifts to remain with him,

³³⁰ *V S H* 2.207; see p. 65.

³³¹ *Trip* 445, App *Lebar Brecc*; *L S* 153.

³³² *V S H* 1.172.

³³³ *V S H* 1.172.

Mochuta refused them all, desiring only to learn the psalms sung by the holy ones of God.³³⁴

An interesting story of swine at pasture is told of the monastery of Saint Gall. Saint Gall, the story says, watched over the goods of his brethren even after he had died. One time when neither swine nor even wild beasts had any pasture because of the sterility of the earth, the swine of the monastery of the holy man were led by a secret impulse to cross the Rhine, and penetrate into a remote desert place. The swineherd following came upon them feeding on good pasture, so that the whole flock fattened. When it came time to return to the monastery the swineherd did not know the way. That night he saw in sleep a venerable old man, who said to him, "I see that the swine are abundantly fed, and should return." The swineherd told the old man his dilemma, whereupon he was told that the whole herd would follow the breeding sow as a leader, and that he should follow, also. It so happened, and the swineherd and his swine arrived safe at the monastery. "*Qua in re quid quam beati Galli merita claruerunt, dum ad usus sibi famulantium ignotum animantibus pastum ostendit, et ea rursus mirabili ordine ad propria revocavit.*"³³⁵

The familiar motive of the tyrannical or unrelenting creditor outwitted by a miracle appears in a story in which the debt is a herd of swine. The unhappy debtor begged that Aedus intercede with the wizard or mage whom he owed to give him time. The mage refused and Aedus himself made good the debt. The mage closed his pen on the swine, but in the evening, though it was still closed, the pigs had vanished. "*Tunc sentit quod nil valet magica ars contra Christianitatem.*"³³⁶

A miraculous gift of swine is given Saint Ciarán the Elder. The cook came to him complaining that he had no pigs and he needed them to feed the monks. "God is able to effect that," said Ciarán. Not long after they saw twelve pigs coming to them. They remained and from them many herds were bred.³³⁷

³³⁴ *V S H* 1.172.

³³⁵ Migne, P. L., 114 Walafrid Strabo, *Life of Saint Gall* 1018.

³³⁶ *V S H* 1.40.

³³⁷ *B N nE* 2.102, 115.

There are several stories of theft and the subsequent discomfiture or conversion of the robbers, or the restoration of the loss incurred. Two robbers stole two boars of the herd while Brigit watched them. Dubthach, her foster-father, met the robbers and rescued the swine. Yet on returning he found the herd undiminished.³³⁸ The robbers that stole swine from the pens of Saint Boethius' monastery spent the day trying to cook them, but in the evening the flesh was still raw. The thieves repented and placed themselves and their posterity under the saint's protection.³³⁹ A noble marauder with his men stole a great herd of swine belonging to holy Abbán. The reiver was the son of holy Berchan's sister. Seeing the two old men coming toward him, he made to kill Abbán, but killed Berchan instead. Then he raised his hand to kill Abbán, but found it had withered. Abbán restored holy Berchan and, upon the thief's doing penance, "statimque manus eius sanata est, et ipse quod rapuit integre restituit."³⁴⁰ As the steward of Aengus walked through Muscraige Tire, his followers killed one of a herd of swine and went into the woods to eat it. Enemies happened by and slew the steward and a score of his people on the banks of the Brosnach. Saint Ciarán of Saighir sought to bury the bodies that wild beasts might not devour them. He saw that the monks with him were not enough to carry them all to the church. "In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ," he commanded, "rise, wretched people! Come with me!" The dead men arose, and the pig with them, and those of the band who had not been previously converted became henceforth pious monks with Ciarán.³⁴¹

Casual references to the flesh of pigs need mere mention. Pork was a favorite with the early Irish, as still today. Ciarán of Saighir sent a cow and a pig to supply the Munstermen with food after he had saved them from the hosts of Tara.³⁴² A pig and a bull-calf were put into the cauldron of Guáire the Hos-

³³⁸ *LS* 185.

³³⁹ *VSH* 1.90.

³⁴⁰ *VSH* 1.25.

³⁴¹ *VSH* 1.223; *BNnE* 2.103; *Silva Gad* 2.8 (*Egerton* from *Codex Kilkenniensis* John Colgan).

³⁴² *BNnE* 2.104.

pitiable for his Easter dinner.³⁴³ The king's swineherd came into Modwenna's solitude seeking his lost herd of swine. Modwenna assured him that God would let him find the herd intact. So it came to pass. The swineherd in gratitude killed the best pig, offering it to Modwenna and her sisters. The saint assured him that they did not eat such food. Then seeing the man's sadness, she made the sign of the cross over the pig, and restored it to life.³⁴⁴

Bacon was as popular then as now. A gammon of bacon was blessed by Ciarán and made wheat and honey and fish "and other noble foods" to supply the company of people with him at Cochae's chapel.³⁴⁵ The same miracle was wrought for the saints guesting at Saighir.³⁴⁶ Rations brought to Ciarán of Clonmacnois from a miller's family consisted of "three loaves of wheat with their proportion of bacon and of flesh and a vessel full of ale".³⁴⁷ Scannlán, the prisoner of Aed, after his release through Columcille's intercession, "consumed his dinner, even seven joints of old bacon and ten loaves of wheat".³⁴⁸ The curious story of Pastol, Féchín's cook, is told by Whitley Stokes.³⁴⁹ Féchín sent him to the forge to get a coulter made, giving him a piece of bacon as payment. The smith's son made a coulter of the bacon, and put it into the wallet on Pastol's back. On coming home, Pastol found nothing in the wallet but bacon, but Saint Féchín blessed it and a coulter of iron was made therefrom.

Boars seem to have been given as tribute. For the protection of Ciar Cuirdach, the foreigner, in the war with Ciarraige, Findchua was entitled "every year to thirty boars".³⁵⁰ When Saint Patrick was tending swine for his Druid master, the angel Victor, the saint's special angel, perhaps his guardian angel, told

³⁴³ *Ériu* 1.45 (*Yellow Book of Lecan*, tr. by J. G. O'Keefe).

³⁴⁴ *Capp* 2.201.

³⁴⁵ *B N nE* 2.116.

³⁴⁶ *B N nE* 2.110.

³⁴⁷ *L S* 470.

³⁴⁸ *L S* 313n (from *Edinburgh Ms.*).

³⁴⁹ *R C* 12.347 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

³⁵⁰ *L S* 243.

him it was time that he should go over the sea to learn, for God had determined he should be teacher of the folk of Ireland. His master, however, would not let him go except he obtained a mass of gold equal in size to his head. Patrick went back to his swine, and told the angel his master's words. "Follow yonder boar," said Victor, "and he will dig out of the earth a mass of gold, and take it with thee to thy lord." And it was even so as the angel said.³⁵¹

In this connection it is rather curious to note what a number of stories relating to swine appear in the life of Saint Patrick. He herded them in his youth.³⁵² Later he restored the beloved son of Elelius who had resisted him, when the boy had been trampled on, torn to pieces and almost devoured by swine,³⁵³ an accident sufficiently common in medieval times to be included under the sinister influence of Mars by Chaucer. Patrick in this instance ordered the boy's bones to be brought together for the miracle as in the folk-tale versions of raisings from the dead.³⁵⁴ He also miraculously found gold for building his church in a hole dug by swine,³⁵⁵ and swine, while rooting, dug up gold for the young saint to give the Druid Hono that he might believe in the faith.³⁵⁶ When cast ashore with foreigners on his way to Italy to read the canons with Saint Germanus and without food, he besought God for food and He gave them a fresh-cooked swine, "and wild honey was brought to Patrick like John, the Baptist".³⁵⁷ In a variant of this story, apparently, when escaping from servitude in Ireland, and wrecked on a desert island, without food, the saint himself, and other survivors, and the consignment of dogs carried on the ship, at his prayers were fed by a herd of swine which miraculously appeared.³⁵⁸ From a grave 120 feet long in Dichuil he raised up Cass of Glass, the

³⁵¹ *Trip* 21.443, App *Lebar Brecc*; R C 6.264 ("Extracts from Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum*," ed. by Whitley Stokes).

³⁵² *Trip* 433; App *Lebar Brecc*; L S 153.

³⁵³ *Jocelyn* 117f.

³⁵⁴ *Trip* 199.

³⁵⁵ *Jocelyn* 149f.

³⁵⁶ *Trip* 95.

³⁵⁷ L S 154f.

³⁵⁸ *Trip* 23; Bury, James Bagnell, *Life of Saint Patrick* 31f.

swineherd of a Norwegian king, giving him life long enough for his baptism.³⁵⁹ He accepted a "shaven pig" given by Saint Mocha every year in gratitude for his care of the boy when he took him "a tender youth" from herding swine and tonsured him.³⁶⁰ In punishment for Conaid's antipathy, Saint Patrick in Domnach Airthir Maige declared "swine will feed on thy land forever".³⁶¹ Again he is associated with the "Martinmas pig", which originated in this wise: After Saint Martin tonsured Saint Patrick, Patrick gave a pig for every monk and nun to Martin on his feast (15th of November), killing it, and giving it to the community, in the saint's honor. From then on, everyone kills a pig on Saint Martin's feast, even though he be not a monk of Saint Patrick.³⁶² "Lupait" (from Welsh llwpai 'sow') is the name given the pig killed on this feast. Most striking and interesting among these stories is the grotesque tale of the rebuke administered to Patrick when he momentarily yielded to a desire to eat flesh meat during Lent. Patrick obtained swine's flesh and hid it in a vessel. The angel Victor bade him bring forth the hidden meats and put them into water, and they "immediately became fishes". Jocelyn of Furness declares that this incident, wrongly understood, gave rise to the custom of Saint Patrick's day (always in Lent) of plunging fresh meats into water, calling them when dressed and eaten, "Fishes of Saint Patrick".³⁶³

Wild swine were common in Ireland and receive separate mention below. But swine nominally tame and privately owned might range as if wild and, indeed, (as sometimes in the South with us) might revert to a wild or semi-wild condition, scour the country, become dangerous and quite ready to attack when provoked, inflicting serious wounds. The *Brehon Laws* required a yoke for them even when herded,³⁶⁴ but there was no fine for injuries and shedding of blood by pigs in a sty when meddled

³⁵⁹ *Trip* 123.

³⁶⁰ *Trip* 41, 453 App. *Lebar Brecc*.

³⁶¹ *Trip* 175.

³⁶² *Trip* 561, App *Rawlinson B*.

³⁶³ Jocelyn 29f.

³⁶⁴ 4.87.

with.³⁶⁵ The damage caused by ranging swine was invoked by Diarmuit when he cursed Ruadán, declaring that a herd of swine should range his land and root it up with their snouts, whereupon Ruadán prophesied that "no one shall inhabit Tara henceforth till doom".³⁶⁶

Pet pigs were kept and were notorious for their mischievousness. Saint Marban, brother of Guáire the Hospitable, is said to have had a pet white sow which later versions speak of as a white boar.³⁶⁷ Pet pigs were subject with their less pampered brothers to the law of trespass "to be shut up in a sty lest they harm the neighbors' fields".³⁶⁸ The same *Laws* seem to have levied as much fine on a pet pig as on two other animals for the first offence, as much as on three animals for the second, as much as four for the third.³⁶⁹

Whatever discredit may attach to the slothful, gross and gluttonous domestic pig of a later day certainly does not apply to the wild boar and his following, justly respected and feared for his courage and ferocity, or, indeed, apparently to these nominally domesticated swine of early Ireland, far less degenerate and given over to a life of suicidal ease than those of today.

5. GOATS

References to goats are few, but suffice to prove them to have been commonly kept. The *Brehon Laws* place a maximum price on them, and prescribe a tie of leather for securing them.³⁷⁰ Goats were certainly tame, for one reads in "The King and the Hermit"³⁷¹ of a choice spring

"Around which tame swine lie down,
Goats, pigs,
Wild swine, grazing deer
A badger's brood."

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 5.153.

³⁶⁶ *BN nE* 2.316.

³⁶⁷ Meyer, Kuno: *The King and the Hermit*, pp. 11, 13; cited Joyce, P. W., *Social History* 1.312; *Ancient Irish Poetry*, "The King and the Hermit," tr. by Kuno Meyer 48.

³⁶⁸ *Senchus Mór* 1.157, 4.115.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 4.87, 109, 117.

³⁷⁰ 4.87.

³⁷¹ *Ancient Irish Poetry*, tr. by Kuno Meyer, 48.

When Saint Fintan was tending a herd of goats, they were made to appear for dignity's sake as cattle.³⁷²

Use of goats' milk, or of cheese made from it, is not spoken of nor use of their hair to make cloth. There are not even the casual references one might expect to use of their skins for leather garments, unless included among the skins of wolves and other brute beasts worn by Ciarán of Saighir, the Saint John Baptist of Ireland.³⁷³ Nor is the use of their skins for containers for liquids mentioned, unless Patrick's water-bottles in the story which follows were skins, or shaped skin-bottles, such as are still used in many countries today. Skins of kids were an important article of export from Ireland in the 15th century and the leather was no doubt largely used in early times. Goats' flesh was eaten as today—passing in this country when marketed as mutton. The story of Saint Patrick below is warrant for their use in carrying burdens, and we may safely assume that they were employed as draught-animals.

Thefts of goats form the theme of several amusingly grotesque stories. When Patrick was in Húi Meith Tíre, three of the tribe stole one of the two goats that carried water for Patrick. They went swearing a false oath to Patrick whereupon the goat "bleated out of the gullet of the third man who had stolen it." St. Patrick declared, "By God's doom, the goat himself declares the place in which he was eaten! From today forever goats shall follow thy children and thy kindred!"³⁷⁴ According to Colgan,³⁷⁵ descendants of these thieves always had beards "caprinis subsimiles". One day a thief stole a goat from the flocks of Coemgen's monastery and ate it. Coemgen said to him: "O miser, confitere quod fecisti, postulans ueniam; uel ad periurium auda[c]ter accede." The thief, however, was stubborn. "Ilico iam accedens fur ad iurandum, aries ex ore eius balando alte clamauit."³⁷⁶ Yet another goat-story is told of Brigit, who because of the theft of a goat on the part of the lad who had

³⁷² *CS* 227.

³⁷³ *BN nE* 2.118; see p. 138.

³⁷⁴ *Trip* 181, 467 App *Lebar Brecc*; Jocelyn, 199; *LS* 160.

³⁷⁵ *Tr Th* 150 cited *Trip* 181n

³⁷⁶ *V SH* 1.239.

brought the credence table, saw the head of a goat in the Mass-chalice! "Cum autem eucharistiam de manu episcopi sumeret, vidit in calice, quem puer episcopi tenebat, deforme prodigium, hirci videlicet vmbram. Et renuens de calice bibere, visionem episcopo dixit. Tunc episcopus puero ait: 'Quid fecisti? Da gloriam Deo.' Puer autem confessus est se furtum fecisse et vnum hircorum suorum occidisse et partem comedisse. Et cum penitentiam cum lachrymis egisset, vocate Brigida nichil de hircio in calice vidit."³⁷⁷

6. DOGS

References to dogs seem perhaps rather fewer than one would expect in view of the abundant evidence in secular literature as to the value placed on them for hunting, herding, and as pets. In particular, there are frequent references to the great hounds used in hunting the wolf, wild boar, and deer, which were so famous for their size, strength and courage, that they were an article of export to other countries and were sent as presents to foreign kings and princes. They are described as being as massive in bone and limbs as a colt. While of the general ancient strain loosely designated as "grey-hound" (a term often applied to them in translations), they were far different from the highly-bred, slender-limbed animals used for coursing and racing we know by that name today. Rather, they resembled, though supposedly still larger and more powerful, the modern stag-hounds, rough-coated, and able to give a good account of themselves in encounters with dangerous wild animals. The breed is extinct.

The list of dogs in the *Senchus Mór*³⁷⁸ to be fined, if not belled, is illuminating. The fine is due "for the watch-dog of every kind of cattle; for the lap-dog in the house, the watch-dog (chained), for the lawful hunting-hound (the thief-hunter, and deer-hunter in season), the hound of the dunghill (outside the door of the dun)."

Several stories tell of savage dogs, a menace to strangers, perhaps kept as watch-dogs to be unleashed at night to guard the cattle and the duns of nobles and chiefs. These probably

³⁷⁷ *LS* 196; *Capg* 1.157.

³⁷⁸ 1.121, 145; also, 2.119.

included dogs used also in hunting. The ferocity of these dogs is evidenced by provisions in the *Brehon Laws*.³⁷⁹ Here one reads of "dogs of three deeds, tracking, seizing, and defending a person attacked." There follows a section "What is lawful respecting different kinds of dogs".³⁸⁰ A muzzle was required for the dog that made attacks on fowl, lambs and household pets, and an eye-cap for the dog that "did not know its own people from the neighbors".³⁸¹ The law was careful to protect dogs from cruelty. There was a fine for "maiming a chained dog",³⁸² and a fine or honor-price for setting a charmed morsel for the dog in order to see if the charm had virtue.³⁸³

Pet dogs were frequently kept, as one learns again from the old laws. Among the seven pledges the head of a family must give for his family to the community one finds listed: "Child's toys, i. e., the little toys which are his first playthings, i. e. dogs and little cats until they are capable of action; a chained hound which is tied until it come to be capable of action; horses and oxen which do not permit men nor carriages on them".³⁸⁴ See also the references to cats and dogs given above.³⁸⁵

The following stories illustrate the savagery of the larger Irish dogs and their use in hunting. Three told of Saint Patrick demand priority. A number of greyhounds were on the ship on which Saint Patrick was escaping from Ireland, the dogs being a customary article of export to Gaul and Britain. The dogs suffered from hunger even more than the men. "Well, Christian," they accosted Saint Patrick, "you say your God is great; why not pray to him for us who perish here with hunger?" Then Patrick preached his first sermon. In answer to his prayer, a herd of swine rushed by, some of which were killed, and both men and dogs satisfied.³⁸⁶

³⁷⁹ 3.411.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid* 3.411.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.* 3.417.

³⁸² *Senchus Mór* 1.233, 235.

³⁸³ *Ibid.* 1.177, 185.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 5.251.

³⁸⁵ See pp. 66, 82.

³⁸⁶ *Trip* 23; Bury, James Bagnell, *Life of Saint Patrick* 31f.

In the *Lismore Life* there is no mention of the greyhounds, nor of the herd of swine, only of a "fresh-cooked swine", sent "by God at Patrick's prayer". The *Tripartite Life* has no word of the dogs, either. When Saint Patrick landed on the east coast of Ireland on his return as missionary, Díchu set his hound on the cleric. Patrick chanted "Ne tradas, Domine, bestiis animas confitentes tibi". Thereafter the hound became silent. When the dog's master bared his sword to slay the saint, his arm shrivelled at once. At Patrick's prayer, Díchu was healed and repented, offering his bawn or barn to the great apostle for his use. The church built here afterward was called Sabal Pátraic or "Patrick's Barn".³⁸⁷ Carbacc of Ess Ruaid set a dog at Patrick but Cúangus smote the dog with a rod and drove it back.³⁸⁸ The fierceness of these dogs is again evidenced by the legend of Saint Ailbe. The saint was the son of Olchú, "Great Hound", and Sandrith, a maid-servant in the house of Cronán, Lord of Eliogarty. The king would not permit the baby to be brought in. "Hic puer contra voluntatem meam conceptus, ac modo natus", declared the king, "non erit nutritus in domo mea; imo jubeo eum canibus ac feris tradi devorandum". A servant placed the infant on a great stone for the dogs or wild beasts to eat and a wolf came and took him, nourishing him with her own little ones.³⁸⁹ Savage dogs attacked Baithín, Columcille's cousin, his intimate friend and fellow worker. "Nec pretereundum est de quodam cane imum baculi ejus in manu Lugbei monachi levi corrosione lacerante. Cum enim frater iste inter Pictos deambulans ad domum cujusdam ex eis perveniret, canis sevissimus latrans occurrit illi; qui cum levi laceratione baculum ejus dentibus attigisset, ilico illic cadens mortuus est."³⁹⁰ Fierce dogs ran to rend the holy abbot Columba when the saint with Coemgen, Comgallus and Cainnichus met at Huysneach to cement brotherhood. Seeing Columba from afar, Coemgen rose to do him honor. But as he came near, "ecce canes ferocissimi et horribiles occurrerunt ei, uolentes eum

³⁸⁷ *Trip* 37, 451 App *Lebar Brecc*; *LS* 157.

³⁸⁸ *Trip* 147f.

³⁸⁹ *Boll* 4 Sept. 27; *CS* 235; *FSH* 1.46.

³⁹⁰ *CS* 873.

comedere. Videntesque omnes, putabant quod sanctus cum suis occisus esset a canibus. Set signans sanctus Coemgenus contra impetum canum ipsi nutu Dei mitissimi effecti sunt, et pedes sancti Coemgeni et uestimenta gaudentes multum, auribus et naribus, ac lingua lambebant''.³⁹¹ Ciarán the Wright also tamed a fierce hound deliberately set against him by wicked 'laymen', i. e. men still pagan. Seeing the dog bearing down on him, Ciarán said: "'Domine, ne tradas bestiis animam confitentem tibi.' Cum canis fortiter curreret, capud eius diuino nutu intrauit in circo vituli et percussit capud suum ligatus circo contra lignum in quo illud uinctum pendebat, quousque caput suum fregit''.³⁹² The hunting dogs of Brandubh "Rex Laginensium" were the cause of the king's finding Saint Coemgen's retreat, his hermitage in solitude. When they came there, "canes autem non intrauerunt, set super pectora sua ante ostium iacebant. Et erat ibi sub arbore sanctus Coemgenus orans, et aues plures super manus eius et humeros stabant et uolabant circa eum, carmina suauius sancto Dei canentes. Videns venator, stupefactus de hiis reuersus est cum canibus suis ilico, dimittens aprum liberum causa benedictionis sancti anachorite''.³⁹³ Likewise, the feet of dogs hunting a boar that had fled to Coemgen's protection, clove to the ground.³⁹⁴ When this same Coemgen was being carried away from the hollow of the cave where he had sought to find solitude, one of the sons of Dimma was away hunting and did not come to help carry the patron saint. His dogs slew him and finally ate him, though he was afterwards restored to life by the power of Coemgen.³⁹⁵

Dogs were certainly used for herding domestic animals whether earlier or later. A certain kind of dog, *cu-buachaill* 'dog-shepherd', was very carefully trained. The instinct of these animals was so keen that they could distinguish their own cows from many others herded together. Despite this, herd-dogs are not mentioned in the *Lives*, except where Brendan's lions tend

³⁹¹ *Boll* 1 Junii 311; *CS* 841; *VSH* 1.248.

³⁹² *VSH* 1.202; *LS* 265.

³⁹³ *Boll* 1 Junii 309; *VSH* 1.244.

³⁹⁴ *BNNE* 2.124.

³⁹⁵ *BNNE* 2.123.

sheep "sicut canes domestici",³⁹⁶ and a few references, recorded below in the later section of wolves, concerning tending of sheep and cattle,³⁹⁷ that might suggest the origin of the shepherd-dog.

Lap-dogs are explicitly mentioned in the list given above from the ancient laws, and there is a curious story of poetic inspiration there also.³⁹⁸ The blind poet Lughaidh Dall placed his staff on the skull of a dog and by poetic inspiration declared it to be the skull of Brecan's lap-dog, he and his people having been drowned in the vortex of Inbher Bec near Bangor. Lap-dogs, 'mesan' from 'messa', "the worst of hounds", hence "one that is the worst of hounds", because mere playthings,³⁹⁹ were the special property of women, from queens to holy women vowed to virginity. There was a fine for stealing them as for other pet animals, recoverable by the woman's husband.⁴⁰⁰ Again in *Cormac's Glossary*,⁴⁰¹ Mug-éme is given as the name of the first lap-dog that abode in Ireland. Caibre Muse brought it into Ireland from the land of Britain. There are, fortunately, one or two explicit references to the cherishing of these animals as pets. Lábán or Muirgen ('born of the sea') had been changed into a mermaid and lived for a year in a *grianan* or boudoir under the sea, after which she was changed into a salmon and her lap-dog into an otter, which bore her company for the three hundred years of her captivity. She was taken in a net by the saints and baptized by Saint Comgall of Bangor.⁴⁰² After Muirgen's capture, a "large-bodied dark-visaged fierce hero" came and killed her lap-dog. Whereupon Muirgen prophesied that he should not be able to defend himself against his enemies. The man repented "and humbled himself before her".⁴⁰³

³⁹⁶ *V S H* 1.142.

³⁹⁷ See pp. 133, 134, 135.

³⁹⁸ *Senchus Mór* 1.44n; see pp. 66, 82.

³⁹⁹ "Cormac's Glossary" 115 cited P. W. Joyce, *Social History* 2.455.

⁴⁰⁰ *Senchus Mór* 1.145; cf. 127, 151, 153.

⁴⁰¹ xxvii, cited *Trip App* 571.

⁴⁰² *Félz* 53f, 55n cites *LU* 40f for story in prose; Reeves: *Antiquities of Down and Ulster*, 377f; *Kilk. Archaeol. Journ.* 1870-1, 100 cited by Joyce, P. W., *Social History* 2.462; *Annals of Ulster* anno 571 63, tr. by William Hennessy.

⁴⁰³ Joyce, P. W., *Old Celtic Romances* 104.

Cruimtheris seems to have been one of the nine daughters of the King of the Lombards, who, with a daughter of the King of Britain came to see Saint Patrick. The saint assigned them individual places of abode where they should lead lives of virginity. Cruimtheris set up at Cenoga, and Benén, Patrick's psalmist, used to carry her rations to her every night. The saint planted an apple tree in Achad-inna Elta ('the Field of the Doe') taken from Cenoga in a field called Aball Patraic ('Patrick's Orchard'). Cruimtheris seems to have had a milking-deer, for it was "The milk of the doe . . . that used to be given to the lap-dog that was near the virgin, namely Cruimtheris".⁴⁰⁴

The accustomed presence of cats and dogs about the home seems indicated by the reference to the superlative quality of the dye made by Ciarán's mother: "never was made before or after dye-stuff as good as it, for though all the cloth of Cenél Fiachrach were put into its iarcáin (i. e. after-dye), it would make it blue, and finally it made blue the dogs and cats, and the trees, against which it came".⁴⁰⁵

That puppies and kittens were familiar playmates of children is indicated by the quotation given above from the *Senchus Mór* enumerating the "seven pledges" a father of a family must give the community.⁴⁰⁶

Solicitude for hungry animals, the motive in so many stories, appears in Brigit's feeding of a hungry hound with two of the five slices of bacon given her to be boiled for a noble guest of Dubthach. Brigit gave a "miserable hungry hound" the fifth piece of bacon, but the dog was not satisfied with that, so she gave him another slice. Dubthach inquired if the bacon were boiled and if "the portions remained". "Count them," she said. Not one was missing. The guest supposed to have been asleep told the mage what Brigit had done. "The guests did not consume that food, for they were unworthy thereof; but it was dealt out to the poor and needy."⁴⁰⁷ Again, in the life of

⁴⁰⁴ *Trip* 233.

⁴⁰⁵ *L S* 267.

⁴⁰⁶ See p. 83.

⁴⁰⁷ *L S* 185f.

that inveterate lover of animals, Saint Moling: Thirty hunting dogs came to the holy old man, tired from wandering. Moved with compassion, Moling made a place for them in which to rest until they could be fed. He then ordered the steward to set before them thirty loaves of bread with plenty of butter. The servant going out with the food perceived that there were only fifteen dogs around the place. Moling generously ordered him, "Quod canibus parastis, date illis totum; et quod nutu[s] Dei eis ostenderit faciant, totum commendendo, uel sociis suis partes suas seruando. Eamus; alii canes cito reuertentur". When the thirty loaves of bread and the butter were set before them, each of the fifteen dogs took only his share — one loaf. The other fifteen dogs coming later did in like manner. Refreshed after their refection, they came immediately to where the holy man was "et gauisi sunt auribus et caudis coram eo, quasi gratulantes pro prandio suo". The saint giving them leave, they ran on their way.⁴⁰⁸

A dog entrusted with a commission by Saint Brigit displayed his devoted loyalty.⁴⁰⁹ Brigit "quamdam non parvam, sed grandem, lardi partem cum cane dimisit. Et cum esset inquisita, non alicubi, sed in loco ubi canis solebat esse, mense transacto intacta et integra reperta est. Non enim canis ausus est comedere depositum beatae Virginis, sed custos patiens lardi et idoneus, contra suum solitum morem, Divina refraenatus virtute et domitus, extitit."

Curiously enough, there are several stories which indicate that the flesh of dogs was sometimes eaten as food. They do not seem to suggest that this was due to temporary exigency, comparable to the occasional cases of cannibalism in the Middle Ages caused by famine. It has been noted above that horse flesh is rated below the flesh of cattle. The serving of dog's flesh to a guest was considered an insult. Saint Déclán once forbade his disciples to eat of flesh put before them because he knew by the power of God that it was dog-flesh. Dercan the host had commanded his servants "ut canem occulte occiderent, et capud et

⁴⁰⁸ *Boll* 4 Junii 334; *V S H* 2.200.

⁴⁰⁹ *Boll* 1 Feb. 137.

pedes eius absconderent in terra, et carnem eius bene coquerent, et postea discipulis sancti Declani traderent ad manducandum. Et precepit, ut ille canis pinguis esset, et suaderent illis blande illam carnem bene commedere, quasi ouinam''. Déclán, however, would not bless the meat, knowing that it was dog's flesh. "Tunc nutu Dei uidit uir sanctus vnguem pedis canis per frusta carnis," though the four feet had been buried in the earth. Then Déclán declared "Non ouis vnguis hec est, set canis." Dercan saw the marvel and himself believed and his family and following.⁴¹⁰ A similar story is told of Saint Adamnán. The saint was staying on a certain Sunday in the country of Magh Brehg. Four of the *Úi Cuirb* tribe brought a sheep and with it a cooked dog. The outrage was discovered by Adamnán and a malediction pronounced on them and their race, not, however, to last longer than the fourth generation.⁴¹¹ Saint Patrick brought a yellow hound to life after it had been cooked. Charmed by the beauty of *Cnocna-radhare*, i. e., the Hill of Views, Saint Patrick determined to build there a church. While the work was progressing a woman of the village of Ballinorea sent the saint a present of an animal cooked in a dish for his dinner. Saint Patrick suspected that it was an unclean animal and prayed that God would restore it to life. His prayer was heard, a yellow hound sprang from the dish. The workmen went in pursuit to kill it, lest "it would blast the fruits of the earth and injure all living things in its course''. The workmen overtook the hound and killed it. Over its grave sprang up a stunted white thorn, "the little thorn of the hound''. All the stones for a mile show the track of the hound's feet, and the stone on which Saint Patrick prayed, the impression of his knee. The saint uttered his malediction on the wicked woman and her progeny and the village of Ballinorea, "for the inhabitants are remarkable for indocility and viciousness, and for a total incapability of civilization''.⁴¹² Another story, perhaps a variant, records a like insult offered to Saint Patrick by a woman of the mountains—the serving of

⁴¹⁰ *Boll* 5 Julii 603f; *V S H* 2.50f.

⁴¹¹ *Anecdota* 2.16; cf. 35.358 (ed. by J. Vendryes).

⁴¹² *Ibid.* 357f.

a hound in a dish for dinner. When Patrick came to Longford, the wicked Caibre's sons received him with honor and gave him a beautiful place for his church. But a wicked woman of the mountains presented the apostle with a hound, served in a dish for dinner. Patrick suspected he was being served with the flesh of an unclean animal, and kneeling, prayed to God to restore the beast to life. Before the multitude, the greyhound leaped forth. Patrick killed the animal, and pronounced a malediction on these mountains of Leinster, and on the race of Caibre. It is still believed that the curse remains on the mountains, for they are more barren than the others. The people, too, are more rude and untractable than in any other part of Ireland.⁴¹³

It will be noted that, possibly merely by accident, there is no evidence that dogs were commonly kept in monasteries, or were attached in close intimacy, like other animals domestic and wild, to individual saints. The story of Brigit and of the lap-dog of Cruimtheris form no exception to this. It is worth notice also that there is little or no evidence of hunting as regularly practised, even for food, though wild animals may be slain to meet special needs, while fishing is permissible and is spoken of frequently. It is truly disappointing that the references to dogs are so few, for the part the great hounds play in heroic myth and fiction engage the imagination whether one pictures them lying at the hall-door or by the fire, stalking behind the heroes, unleashed and cheered on to the hunt, or when specially signalized, like the monstrous watch-dog from which Cuchulain drew his name, the hounds of Fionn, or the metamorphosed Bran, which appears in the *Colloquy* of Saint Patrick with Oisín. Here in the *Lives* is one touch drawn plainly from heroic story. Saint Findchua, like Cuchulain, takes his name from *cú*, meaning dog. He is so named because of the "howling and rending of a hound that possessed him in valor" when he espoused the cause of his kindred, the host of Ciarriage, "Wherefore the name *Findchú* clave to him, that is like a *cú* ('hound')".⁴¹⁴

Wholly to legendary fiction, also, must be referred the little dog in Brendan's voyage. The mariner-saint came to a blessed

⁴¹³ *F M* anno 492, vol. i; cf. *Trip* c30.

⁴¹⁴ *LS* 243.

port where a little dog ran down to the sea to meet him, and guided the company to a great hall with beds and seats and food where they abode three days and three nights.⁴¹⁵

7. CATS

There is little to be said concerning cats—except the cat-dragon discussed in the section on fabulous animals. As everywhere, cats in Ireland are beloved, but treated with a questioning superstition—it is much better not to take away a house-cat when moving; to turn back from a journey or important mission if a cat is met; and one feels in one's bones that a cat has an ironic if not sinister understanding of all that is said and done.

That cats were familiar pets has already appeared in the previous section on dogs from the provisions of the *Laws*⁴¹⁶ and the description of the wonderful dye of Ciarán's mother. Moreover, in the section on sheep, cats have appeared among the possessions lawful for a woman.⁴¹⁷ Ireland's saintly virgins seem more prone to lap-dogs than cats, unlike the anchoresses of the *Ancren Riwle* who at least were advised to limit themselves to one cat. But the cats in the *Lives* are few indeed.

Popular tradition⁴¹⁸ has it that cats were specially created by the Almighty to keep down the mice which swarmed into Noah's Arc and threatened wholly to consume the food allocated for the support of the passengers, human and animal. In the *Book of Leinster*⁴¹⁹ there is a legend of a cat of which Gaidoz has made a translation with notes. The *Book of Lismore* furnishes some variant readings.⁴²⁰ Three clerical students of the men of Ireland went on pilgrimage. "There was no provision taken to sea, save three cakes. 'I will bring the little cat' ", one of them said. When they reached the main, in Christ's Name, they cast away their oars, and threw themselves on the mercy

⁴¹⁵ *V S H* 1.109.

⁴¹⁶ Cf. 1.151; see p. 83.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. 1.149; see p. 66.

⁴¹⁸ Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths* 2.126.

⁴¹⁹ 283.

⁴²⁰ *L S* viii.

of the Lord. They came to an island, with plenty of water and plenty of firewood, and there they built their church. "The little cat goes from them. It draws to them a veritable salmon, up to three salmon for every (canonical) hour." They were distressed. "Oh God, our pilgrimage is no pilgrimage now! We have brought provision with us, our cat to feed us. It is sad now to eat of his catching. We will not partake of the cat's produce." The story goes on to state that they fasted until God sent them supernatural food on the altar. In turn the first two died, until only the third man was alive, aged and withered when Brendan came from the sea. "Brenainn blessed him and gave him communion and sacrifice, so he went to heaven; and a watch of angels is always over them in their island."

There is no further mention of this cat, but it was evidently an innocent and helpful creature. None the less, one feels certain that this cat is either the progenitor or an emasculated version of the terrible cat-dragon who made after the old man and Brendan's company till destroyed by the providential whale, as related in the section on fabulous animals below. In fact, the hermit here told Brendan, "we were twelve men when we went on our pilgrimage; and we brought yon monstrous sea-cat with us, as a little bird [*sic*, ? "beast"], and he was very dear to us and he waxed greatly, and never did any hurt to us".⁴²¹ No such cat as played the host to Mailduin appears in Brendan's experiences. Its place is taken by the dog, that ushers the saint and his company from the shore to hospitable halls with seats and beds and food.

In the *Lives* but one story tells of a cat—the 'muriceps' that killed the wren that ate the fly that Saint Moling valued so highly. For that story, see below.⁴²² In Graves' *Celtic Psalter*, however, there is a poem,⁴²³ "The Monk and His White Cat", taken from an 8th or 9th century Irish poem in the *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus*, in which there is a cat called by name:

⁴²¹ *L S* 259.

⁴²² *P.* 165f.

⁴²³ 44f; also *Ancient Irish Poetry* (tr. by Kuno Meyer) 81.

“Pangar, master of his art
Plays his part in pranksome youth;
While in age, sedate I clear
Shadows from the spear of Truth.”

8. DOMESTIC FOWL

It is surprising that in the entire range of the *Lives* covered, only a half-dozen references should be found to domestic fowl, the more so as other sources, as well as the few references in the *Lives*, prove them to have been generally kept and valued. This is true in particular of hens; geese appear in the *Brehon Laws*, and two references somewhat dubiously romantic; pigeons walking upon the lawn are spoken of in the lament for Erin ascribed to Columcille, while the wonderful ducks guarded in so miraculous a fashion, which Giraldus tells of, are plainly wild ducks, and find mention below.

The nice particularity of the ancient laws appears in their provisions regarding poultry, as in other connections. There are fines for the trespassing of hens, the fowls themselves being punished for their misdemeanor, and for the use of egg-shells for the measurement of liquids. There is a fine for the “hen without delight”, that is, one without the delight of hatching, or laying of eggs.⁴²⁴ Hens found guilty of “hedge-crime”, passing through hedges, had their wings clipped and a spancel put on them,⁴²⁵ and might also be punished for “snatching away, spilling and wasting”.⁴²⁶ The ninth part of the value of a hen is given for every chick of her chickens as long as they are with her, but when separated from her, half the mother’s value is given till laying, when the large hen and pullets are equal in value.⁴²⁷ Yet again one reads “a goose, a crane, a kitten, a cock, or whelp, none of these shall pay the compensation of the other”.⁴²⁸ Hens that were special pets paid an additional fine for trespassing.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁴ *Brehon Laws* 5.83.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.* 2.119.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.* 4.117.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.* 3.381.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.* 5.473.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.* 4.115.

Though but three in number, the stories concerning hens (including one rooster) rate well in interest. One tells how Saint Tigernach, after a theft, placed his poultry under the charge and protection of the hawk-tribe, as told below.⁴³⁰ The second⁴³¹ concerns a fox that, though he was one of the animals that ate from Saint Moling's hand, yielded to temptation and stole a hen that belonged to the brothers. When he was accused of his crime and saw the anger of Saint Moling, the sly fellow went to another religious house of nuns under the care of the Saint and stole another hen, bringing it alive and well to the saint. Moling smiled to himself and chided the deceitful one: "You have stolen again; take this hen back to the nuns and put her safe in her place, and henceforth live without stealing like other animals." The fox took the hen between his teeth, and left her safe with the neighboring sisterhood.

The third⁴³² is the inimitable tale telling how, as the heading announces, "*mirabiliter in eremo juvatur ministerio galli, muris et culicis*" by Saint Colmán. Its three characters enter into no dramatic action, but it simply cannot be abbreviated, so winning is the gentle and ingenuous piety with which it is moralized. "*Inter caeteras autem virtutes, quibus illum Sancti Spiritus ditaverat gratia, eximius erat paupertatis evangelicae cultor et custos, rerumque transitoriarum, adeo mirificus contemptor, ut nullas admitteret terrenas possessiones, omnia donaria, et quaecumque ultro oblata respueret, nihil prorsus proprium retineret, nisi proprium fortasse dixeris tria, quae, teste Ketino traditur familiaria habuisse animalcula, gallum gallinaceum, murem et culicem. Gallo, utebatur, ut ejus cantu, velut cymbalo de nocte ad divinas laudes excitaretur. Muris autem et culicis miranda magis et stupenda erant ministeria: at, quos natura ad molestias et incommoda hominibus inferenda instruxerat, eos contra naturae pondus ad servorum suorum obsequia inflexerat mira Dei benignitas. Mus enim ita viro Dei famulabatur, ut ultra statas et juxta ipsius pia proposita statutas horas eum non per-*

⁴³⁰ See p. 172.

⁴³¹ *V S H* 2.201.

⁴³² *Boll* 12 Oct. 884.

mitteret dormire vel quiescere; sed quando natura, vigiliis, orationibus aliisque austeritatibus fatigata, somnum aut quietem ampliozem, quam viri Dei vota praefixerant lassis artubus postularet, nunc vestes rodendo, nunc auriculas mordendo eum ab omni quiete revocaret. Gratum erat viro Dei ejusmodi obsequium, quo videbat et vota sua adimpleri, et se a bruto animante ad Dei servitia provocari. Sed et culicis obsequia vix minus miranda. Quando enim vir Dei piaee lectioni vacabat, culici, super ejus codicem cursitanti, mandabat ut lineam, ad quam ipse alio avocatus vel aliter occupandus sistebat, observaret, usquedum reversus ipse inchoatam denuo continuaret lectionem; quod et culex infallibiter faciebat. Mirae sunt hae divinae benevolentiae dignationes, et Christi cum servis suis quasi collusiones; sed solis illis videri poterunt incredibiles, qui parum considerant quam mirabilis sit Deus in sanctis suis, quam suavis tenerique affectus erga sincere diligentes se, quamque dignum sua ineffabili bonitate existimet, ut, qui animo sibi melius et expeditius inserviendi omnem hominum famulatum et servitium abdicarunt, ipsi a brutis animantibus obsequia et quasi humana quaedam ministeria accipiant; et Dominum, cujus tremendae majestatis altitudinem suspiciunt et adorant, tamquam blandum et indulgentissimum experiantur amicum.” Then in the Divine Wisdom, the little creatures died. In his grief, Colman sent word to Columcille on the island of Hy. “Cui S. Columba fertur jocose simul et prudenter rescripsisse, jacturas et damna non esse, nisi ubi substantiae et possessiones reperiuntur; quasi ea sententia virum Dei, summae alias abdicationi et paupertati deditum, argueret, quod cor erga parva apponeret, quo tamen magna et alta spreverat et abdicarat.”

There is pathos in the story. How often those who have heroically given up home and friends, all that life holds dear, become attached to some small object that holds back the swift flight of their soul to God! Columcille, consummate master of the spiritual life, knew this, hence his comment. Nevertheless, one has it in his heart to feel sorry for the old man in the loss of his three faithful servitors.

Giraldus has interesting remarks upon Irish poultry.⁴³³ He

⁴³³ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 87f.

relates that while the ordinary cocks divide the third and last watches of the night by crowing three successive periods in the intervals, the Irish cocks crow "a little before dawn and the day is known to be as far off from the first cock-crowing hen as it is elsewhere from the third". He even goes so far as to say that cocks brought to the island, moreover, adopt the Irish cocks' custom and crow with them! In Ulster County, too, Giraldus relates the wonder of a cemetery where no female is permitted to enter. When the cock enters he must do so without the hen, and even though he calls his mate, she will not enter the enclosure sacred to the masculine gender.⁴³⁴

In a legendary account given in the *Feast of Dun-nan-gedh* (*Moyrath*, 19) cited by P. W. Joyce,⁴³⁵ Bishop Erc of Slane is said to have kept a flock of geese to provide eggs, his meal every evening consisting of "an egg and a half and three sprigs of the cresses from the Boyne". From Reeves⁴³⁶ we read that at the great feasts eggs were served cold and that Comgall, viewing the viands beforehand, sampled one. Before each chief was placed a goose-egg, cold, in a silver dish. In the *Brehon Laws*⁴³⁷ we further learn that geese are entitled to share in the common pasturage, may be fined for trespassing, two are to be given in lieu of one sheep in the "smacht-fine", and their value is prescribed as in the case of other animals.

Apropos of Bishop Erc's goose-eggs, it is curious that though the *Lives* mention a rather diversified assortment of foods, covering one might suppose the somewhat limited fare available, eggs are mentioned only once, and that in Manus O'Donnell's *Betha Colaim Chille*,⁴³⁸ where one reads the story of how Columcille was with Molaise of Devenish one time and the latter sent him to the guest-house, and, though it was in the Ember Days, offered him salt pork. Columcille was surely in a dilemma: if he did not eat it he would cast aspersion on Molaise's hospitality; if he did eat it, he would break the Ember abstinence. Now

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.* 62.

⁴³⁵ *Social History* 2.153.

⁴³⁶ *Culdees* 25ff.

⁴³⁷ 2.101; 3.381; 4.101.

⁴³⁸ P. 119.

Columcille, divining it was out of ill-will he had sent him meat, "ate a small part thereof". "And the fare that Molaise had that night was hens' eggs and bread." This was revealed to Columcille, and when Molaise chided him with eating meat in abstinence time, Columcille said: "Howbeit, let there be put upon the altar hens' eggs and the like of the meat I had last night, and I will pray God to reveal to all which of us hath broken the Ember abstinence". It was done, and when Columcille's prayer was ended, "a cock rose up from one of the eggs and fell to crowing upon the altar in the sight of all. And of the salt pork was made an acorn of an oak". Thus was Columcille saved from breaking the abstinence. "A clutch of eggs" is mentioned in the food of Marvan, brother of Guáire in the 10th century poem, "The King and the Hermit", translated by Kuno Meyer.⁴³⁹ "A few dry eggs" are mentioned as part of the fast in an old *Irish Penitential*.⁴⁴⁰

The eating of domestic fowl of any kind is not spoken of in the *Lives*, yet they must have been used for food. Eggs were a part of the relaxation permitted the Culdees: a "dry", that is, a hard-boiled egg, together with curds and cheese or apples; at Easter "eggs and lard and the flesh of wild deer and wild hogs".⁴⁴¹

The early practice of using "the full of a hen-egg" as a unit of measure seems to prove that eggs were readily at hand unless it is merely a nominal unit, which in any case would point to a still earlier use. This might seem curious until one remembers that measuring by the shell of an egg used in making a recipe, by that means adjusting other ingredients to the size of the egg used, is still sometimes employed today. Whatever the actual measure employed, it is amusing to read of a meal with four and twenty clerics and twelve laymen to be served. All get equal quantities of food but the clerics get a single measure of ale against the laymen's double, so that they may not get drunk, and their canonical hours be set astray.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁹ *Ancient Irish Poetry* 48.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ériu* 7.143 (from *Ms. 3 B 25*, tr. by E. J. Gwynn).

⁴⁴¹ Reeves: *Culdees* 203.

⁴⁴² *Book of Achaill* 337.

The gathering of eggs of wild birds is mentioned by Giraldus,⁴⁴³ in connection with the sanctuaries established by the saints for birds and beasts.

9. BEES

Both learned authority and saintly legend affirmed that Ireland originally had no bees. Solinus in the 2nd century, in his *Polyhistor*, so obviously abstracted in great part from Pliny the Elder that he has been called "Pliny's ape", in a passage on Ireland,⁴⁴⁴ after remarking "Illic nullus anguis, avis rara, gens inhospita et bellicosa", later inserts the statement among his disconnected notes, "Interea apes non habent; advecto inde seu pulvere, seu lapillo, si quid sparseris inter alvearia, examina favos deserunt." The *Life of Saint Donatus*⁴⁴⁵ follows Solinus almost verbally, "Scotiae autem nulla anguis, avis rara, apis nulla; in tantum adeo ut advectos inde pulveres seu lapillos si quis alibi sparserit inter alvearia, examina favos deserant." The statement in *Polyhistor*, and the curious belief that Irish dust or gravel would drive bees from their hives in other countries has naturally awakened much interest.⁴⁴⁶

As will be seen in a moment, legend tells that bees were first brought from Wales by saintly hands. Certainly, despite Solinus, bees both wild and domestic existed in Ireland at a very early time. Giraldus in the 12th century has an interesting comment upon them, "Like other countries, it has been producing honey, and I think it would overflow from their cells more abundantly if the increase of the swarms were not checked by bitter and poisonous yews with which the woods of the island abound; or rather if the violent winds and the moisture of the climate in Ireland did not disperse the swarms of so minute an animal or cause them to perish."⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴³ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 101f; see below, p. 243.

⁴⁴⁴ *Polyhistor*, 91 cap 22 2-7.

⁴⁴⁵ *Boll* 9 Oct. 655f.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. e. g. Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths* 1.226f. It must have gotten its start from some confused misunderstanding of the practice of throwing dust or gravel among new colonies leaving the hive to cause them to swarm.

⁴⁴⁷ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 21f.

There is clear evidence that bee-keeping was generally practised. A special section of the tracts *Bech Bretha* in the *Brehon Laws* ⁴⁴⁸ concerns rights of various parties to swarms, hives and honey, and for injuries done by bees on men and animals. The *Senchus Mór* ⁴⁴⁹ prescribes penalties for stealing and killing bees and contains this interesting description of "distrain" on bees "for the crime of their mouths". A "tideal", or flowery branch, is taken to the aperture of the hives, and under witness the marks that the bees make on the flower are duly noted. The violation of the boundary pledge is sworn upon the bees, and the claimant paid in fruit or in a swarm of young bees. If this is not sufficient, the claimant is entitled to as many bees as he can catch in his hand.

Whether or not Ireland has bees of her own, legendary tradition is clear on the point that bees were introduced into Ireland from Wales. Thus in the *Félire* ², ⁴⁵⁰ the *Calendar of Oengus*, the inscription for the festival of Saint Madomnoc, on February 13th reads:

"In a little boat from the east,
over the pure-colored sea, my
Domnóc brought—vigorous cry!—
the gifted race of Ireland's bees."

And again, "Madomnoc brought bees, i. e. the full of his bell." ⁴⁵¹

The story of the coming of the little brown bees is charming. Ireland had no bees. Now at the time when Saint David directed in Britain his great school at Menevia, where so many glorious apostles were trained, a student Mendudauc, or Madomnoc by name, came from the heart of Ireland to learn from the great saint of Wales. During the long years that Madomnoc remained at Menevia, the many beehives, the great abbey's wealth, were confided to his care. When it came time for the Irishman to go back to his country, his little friends the bees would not leave him. Three times he bore them back to their cells; three times

⁴⁴⁸ 4.163-203.

⁴⁴⁹ 2.121f.

⁴⁵⁰ P. 60.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.* 113.

did they cluster around him, and follow his vessel far out to sea. David was generous, indeed; both he and his brethren were willing to have the Irish monk depart with the monastery's richest possession. David is said to have put this blessing on the bees: "May the land to which you are brought abound with your progeny, and may their species and generation never fail, but our own city shall be forever deprived of you, nor shall your seed any longer increase in it". The prophecy was fulfilled, for if bees thereafter were brought to Menevia, they did not thrive. Giraldus says that bees were extinct in Menevia in his time. "Ex quo factum est, ut apes, quae nunquam antea in Hybernia, ut fertur visae fuerant, ab eo quo tam miraculose per ipsum transvectae sunt tempore ibidem abundare, in Menevia vero ab illa semper hora deficere consueverint."⁴⁵²

The British bees, however, prospered in their Irish home; their honey was ever sweet, the green forests of Ireland were soon perfumed by its sweetness. Barneval has a quaint interpretation of this legend: "The real bees of Menevia were, according to the expression of the legendaries, the saints formed by their British masters, who came back to Ireland laden with the sweet treasures of Christian lore and Christian charity, and the honey which then for the first time perfumed Ireland's woods was the spirit of tenderness and grace that the Gospel gave forth."⁴⁵³

Saint Gobnat is the special patroness of bees. Oengus in his *Calendar* thus exalts her on her festival, February 11:⁴⁵⁴

"My Gobnat with pure goodness
as to God's love was opulent".

The note on this passage⁴⁵⁵ explains that there are two Gobnats: "My Gobnat from Muscaige Mitaine, i. e., a sharp-beaked nun, Ernaide is the name of the place where she is", or "Gobnat of Bairnech in Móin Mór in the south of Ireland, and of the race of Conaire is she; a virgin of Conaire's race". The

⁴⁵² Giraldus, *Works*, ed. by Brewer 3.396f.

⁴⁵³ *Legendary History* 97.

⁴⁵⁴ *Félz* 60.

⁴⁵⁵ *Félz* 73; cf. Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths* 1.228.

patroness of bees was obviously not "the sharp-beaked nun" but the genial saint of the South. Legend has it that she lived in Ballyvourney on the mountains between Kerry and Cork. This would seem to be substantiated by the fact that Saint Abbán gave her a church there. "And he blessed Boirnech (Ballyvourney), and gave it to Gobnat".⁴⁵⁶ A curious cult connected with her memory for persons sick with small-pox prescribed that her statue should be sent for, a sheep killed, the sick person wrapped in the skin, the flesh of the sheep being eaten by the family. This may be a survival of the heathen practice⁴⁵⁷ of investment with the skin of a sacrificed animal, thus attaining enlightenment through the divinity to which it was sacrificed. Ruins remain of her church at Kilgobnat near Dungarvon and Doctor Plummer was told by an old man that he remembered pilgrimages in her honor on February 11 to a sacred well in a field above the church.⁴⁵⁸

Wood-Martin notes a remarkable tradition current in Macrom in Cork which may possibly be responsible for Saint Gobnat's patronage of the bees. A chief, on the morning of battle, dismayed at the inferiority in numbers of his followers compared with those of his enemies, prayed Saint Gobnat for aid. The saint changed a swarm of bees near at hand into armed soldiers, who issuing from the hive full panoplied, ranged themselves in ranks and followed their leader to victory. The legend goes on to state that the chieftain visited the mountains here after the battle and found that the rush-formed hive had been turned into a brass utensil. This article was for long in the possession of the O'Hierlyhie family, and was venerated by all the peasantry of the district.⁴⁵⁹

This seems an analogue of the charming story told by Alice Dease in her *Good Women of Erin*,⁴⁶⁰ for which no early version has been discovered by the writer, except in Canon O'Hanlon.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁶ *BNnE* 2.7.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. Macculloch *RAC* 250.

⁴⁵⁸ *BNnE* 2.323n cites Richardson: *Great Folly of Pilgrimages*, 70f; cf. *VSH* l.xcvii.

⁴⁵⁹ *Elder Faiths* 1.228.

⁴⁶⁰ P. 60.

⁴⁶¹ *Irish Saints* 2.464.

Gobnat lived in Ballyvourney on the mountains between Kerry and Cork. She must have been a lovable saint, for the place of her abode, "Ballyvourney", means "home of the beloved". Here the virgin of Conaire's race worked in her garden "busy settling the brown bees, that she had only just received from Saint Modomnoc of Cambria, "the first to bring working bees into Ireland". The bees had travelled to her in a 'beachaire', or square box, made on purpose to hold bees. This the saint had in her hand when a band of robbers approached, threatening to destroy the chieftain's lands and dwellings in his absence. The saint went out to entreat them to forego their pillaging, but they would not listen to her. Then Gobnat opened the box containing the bees, leaving the doors ajar. One by one they escaped until the air "was brown with their bodies". The robber-bands were terror-stricken, and turning their horses, fled. If Saint Gobnat received these bees from Madomnoc while he was in Britain, then it may be that they are the first bees in Ireland. Be that as it may, the story is delightful for itself.

A story in *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*⁴⁶² tells how bees wrought a shrine for the Sacred Host which had been carelessly dropped. "A good noble reverend priest, and he was God's own servant and one that bore the yoke of devotion to Christ", one day went to carry the Sacred Host to a sick man. A swarm of bees came his way and he laid the Sacred Host on the ground "and gathered the swarm into his bosom . . . and so went his way". The bees went back from him and found the Host, bearing It away from them "to the dwelling where they lived; and they paid it reverence lovingly, and made for it a fair chapel of wax and an altar and a Mass-chalice and a pair of priests, fashioning them fairly of wax, to stand over the Host". The priest in "anxiety and contrition" went searching for the Sacred Host, but could not find It. After a full year spent "in penitence", an angel came to him and told him "where the Host was reverently sheltered". The angel likewise told him to bring many people with him to see It. They went and seeing It "many of the people thereupon believed in It".

⁴⁶² Ériu 1.82 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum*, tr. by E. J. Gwynn).

To this story there is an interesting analogue.⁴⁶³ Evil men told a rustic, desirous of wealth, to steal the Host on Easterday and place It in his beehive. All the bees flocked to this hive and began to construct a church of marvelous workmanship. Bees of the vicinity came to aid them. Though they rushed upon the rustic when he approached, stinging him severely, yet when the priest of the place came to bring the little wax church to the great church to place it on the altar, the bees, "leaving the hive, rose in the air, making sweet melody".

The keeping of bees is mentioned in the life of Saint Boethius, or Buite. The saint is said to have visited Saint Tilianus, "Et quia obedientia cum uera humilitate est fundamentum omnis operis uirtuosi, pater abbas dedit ei custodiam apum monasterii, ut eas diligenter custodiret atque nutriret. Quam obedientiam uoluntarie ipse admisit, et illibatas eas custodiuit. Uixit quoque filius uere obedientie sub disciplina tanti patris cum magna morum [integritate] et honestate."⁴⁶⁴ Mr. Nicholson of the Bodleian conjectures that Tilianus is the famous Teilo of Llandaff and that Caer Bwdy, a place close to Saint David's in Wales, should be interpreted Castrum Boetii.⁴⁶⁵ A certain confirmation may be given to this hypothesis by the statement in *Vita Sancti Boecii*,⁴⁶⁶ namely that the saint was given the care of bees, the Irish tradition being that bees were introduced into Ireland from Wales.⁴⁶⁷

Be that as it may, Boethius seems to have understood the language of bees, for "quadam uero die cum ad uisitandas apes more solito aduenisset, audiuit magnum tumultum in aluearibus cum eis. Cum proprius ad explorandum, si quid aduersi eis accideret, accederet, causam murmuris sine enigmate intellexit. Quod cum magistro suo intimaret, et ille fratribus exponeret, quidam ex eis uolens experiri si ex sonitu apum posset homo experimentalem habere scientiam, panem latum preparauit, et

⁴⁶³ *Translations and Reprints* 2 No. 4 19, from Etienne de Bourbon.

⁴⁶⁴ *V S H* 1.96f.

⁴⁶⁵ *V S H* 1. xxxv.

⁴⁶⁶ *V S H* 1.96f.

⁴⁶⁷ See p. 99.

butiro superficiem eius. . . .”⁴⁶⁸ Here in the middle of a sentence the *Vita* breaks off leaving the legend unfinished. Bee swarms are also mentioned in the colloquy between King Guáire and Marban in “The King and the Hermit”.⁴⁶⁹

“Swarms of bees and chafers, the little musicians
of the world.”

Again, in the life of Saint Brigit one reads of a poor man’s complaining of his lack of food. Seeing his great poverty, the saint had compassion on him. When he came to see her “*murmur apium auditur sub pavimento domus in qua Brigida pauper invenerat*”. He received sufficient portion of the honey to relieve his need.⁴⁷⁰

That there were wild bees in Ireland seems certainly proved by a story told of Ciarán of Clonmacnois in his boyhood. One day his mother blamed him: “So, the little lads of the hamlet bring honey out of the honeycombs to their households, and thou bringest none to us.” On hearing this Ciarán went to a certain well and filled his vessel out of it and blessed it “so that it was honey” and gave it to his mother. “And that was the honey that was given deacon Justus as his fee for baptizing Ciarán.”⁴⁷¹ A legend closely similar is related of Saint Patrick, concluding thus: “he (Patrick) goes to the water and sains the water so that it became honey and relics were made of that honey and it healed every disease”.⁴⁷² Again when Patrick by God’s power fed the shipwrecked people with the flesh of a swine, they gave him “wild honey as to John the Baptist”.⁴⁷³

Honey, it must be remembered, was the only natural product available for sweetening. In this connection it is worth while to recount the story of Ruadán’s marvelous lime-tree, and the disturbance it caused, necessitating its suppression, though, to be sure, it was God’s direct gift to Ruadán and his fifty monks,

⁴⁶⁸ *V S H* 1.97.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ancient Irish Poetry* 49, tr. by Kuno Meyer.

⁴⁷⁰ *Boll* 1 Feb. 184; *CS* 70.

⁴⁷¹ *LS* 265.

⁴⁷² *LS* 152.

⁴⁷³ *LS* 154f.

giving them sustenance without labor except prayer and genuflection. This tree in the monastery grounds supplied by its sap food that sufficed the brethren and their guests. "Sucus enim ipsius arboris dulcis ualde erat, et sufficebat omnibus de eo gustantibus tam cibo quam potu." Hearing of this, "per totam Hyberniam monachi fugiebant de cellis suis ad locum in quo tantum Dei gratiam audiebant". The saints of Ireland were highly indignant at this defection. They held council and begged Finnian to go to Ruadán, his former disciple. Finnian went, and with Ruadán's permission, signed the tree "et arbor ilico manare cessauit suum sucum". What now was to be done for food? Ruadán bade the cellarer fill the water pots with water—Finnian would turn it to wine. Also by Finnian's prayer a great fish was provided, and he further blessed the fields so that thereafter when ploughed they would need no cultivation, God Himself would care for them. He then went his way in peace, and Ruadán remained with his brethren commending them henceforth to live like all the other monks of Ireland.⁴⁷⁴ It would be interesting to know if the sap of a lime might be extraordinarily sweet like our rock-maple. Bees, as is well known, eagerly seek its flowers.

The abundance of honey in primitive Ireland may be inferred from the great size of the vessels used in measuring it, from a barrel or "milch-cow vessel", so heavy that it could be lifted only to the knee, down to the smaller "heifer-vessel" that could be raised on the shoulders and head.⁴⁷⁵ The frequency with which honey is mentioned may be also an indication of its plentitude. It was mixed with food or used separately. "Thick milk and honey are mixed on the eve of the chief festivals, i. e. at Christmas and the two Easters" (Easterday and the Sunday following) for the Culdees' refectio.⁴⁷⁶ A selanns equal to four egg-shells was used in measuring it for the same brethren.⁴⁷⁷ Honey was enjoyed by Marban in his delightful hermitage.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁴ *V S H* 2.244f.

⁴⁷⁵ *Brehon Laws* 4.165f.

⁴⁷⁶ Reeves: *Culdees* 202.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 206.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ancient Irish Poetry*, "King and Hermit," tr. Kuno-Meyer 49.

A great cauldron of new milk, fresh butter and honey was King Cathal the Glutton's last drink before his conversion from the allurements of the demon of gluttony.⁴⁷⁹ The Land of Promise, too, is often spoken of as "Magh Mell", i. e. "The Honey Plain",⁴⁸⁰ and the fairy Elysium is described as a land of music and fair people, warm streams, choice mead and wine.⁴⁸¹

Again, honey seems to have been not only a delicacy, but offered as a mark of respect to spiritual men as when wild honey was given Patrick while the ship-wrecked crew feasted on the flesh of swine.⁴⁸² In the old *Brehon* precepts, honey is mentioned for the entertainment of guests.⁴⁸³

Honey was chiefly important in the making of mead, the great Irish beverage. Its popularity as a delicacy is indicated by its mention in the *Vision of MacConglinne* as "the dainty drink of nobles".⁴⁸⁴ Abundance of mead seems to have given prestige to a district; one reads of "the mead-abounding murrisk", "the mead-drinking men of Meath", etc. In the *Rule of Saint Ailbe*, a contemporary of Patrick, it is set down that the monks shall get at table mead to "the breadth of a thumb from the bee-swarms".⁴⁸⁵ Findian of Clonard on Sundays and holydays permitted himself a bit of wheaten bread, a piece of broiled salmon and "the full of a cup of clear mead or ale".⁴⁸⁶

Visitors were regaled with mead. A certain man of Brigit's household made mead as a tribute for the King of Leinster, but when they came to drink it, not a drop could be found, "for it had all been consumed before Brigit". The saint blessed the vessels and "the mead was found in fullness", and there never was sweeter mead. There was neither plus nor minus therein.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁷⁹ Joyce, P. W., *Social History* 2.147 cited from *Vision of MacConglinne* 106.

⁴⁸⁰ Hull, Eleanor: *Irish Literature* 21.

⁴⁸¹ Macculloch, *R A C* 363.

⁴⁸² *L S* 154f.

⁴⁸³ 5.41.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. p. 98, cited Joyce, *Social History*, 2.120.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ériu* 3.103 (from *Mss. A¹, A², B¹, B²*, tr. by Joseph O'Neill).

⁴⁸⁶ *L S* 229.

⁴⁸⁷ *L S* 197, 331n, *Franciscan Liber Hymnorum* 43.

Hazel nuts were sometimes used as ingredients in the making of mead, perhaps as flavoring. Finola, the little girl-swan in *The Children of Lir*, speaks of their former joyous life when they drank often of "hazel-mead".⁴⁸⁸ In the romantic story of "The King and the Hermit" from the 10th-century poem in which Guáire the Hospitable and Marban are the principals, one reads of a "cup with mead of hazel-nut" as one of the joys of Marban's hermit life.⁴⁸⁹

Another product of bees, their wax, played an important part in Irish life. Though the better class dipped candles for lighting, and the poorer rushes, in rich houses beeswax candles were used, possibly another illustration of the abundance of bees. Frequent mention of candles occurs in the *Lives*, particularly as used in the services of the Church and altar, and even for reading, but as these same legends belong elsewhere than in a discussion of animal themes, they have not been included here.

We have, however, two stories concerning wax in connection with the monastery of Saint Gall. A certain poor man wished to take a gift to the church. Yielding to the temptation of the devil, he stole a beehive and carried the hive with the honey and bees furtively to his home. He destroyed the bees, and prepared the wax. Not many days after, with his neighbors and friends, he took the stolen gift to the church. When he had offered it, the wax was changed to hardest stones. The man repented and confessed his fault, and the news of the miracle was noised abroad.⁴⁹⁰

Again, wax for the use of the altar was stolen by a certain rustic. He carried it to the guest-house, but found that the wax hidden in his bosom was changed to stone. He ran back to the church, and confessed his fault. When they carried the piece of wax-made stone to the altar, it changed back into its own natural softness.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Joyce, P. W., tr. *Old Celtic Romances*, 24; Leahy, A. H., tr. *Heroic Romances of Ireland*, 1.98.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ancient Irish Poetry* 49, tr. Kuno Meyer.

⁴⁹⁰ Migne, P. L.: 114; Walahfrid Strabo, *Life of Saint Gall* 1011.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.* 1027f.

10. DOMESTICATED PESTS

Certain self-domesticated pests best find place here — mice, flies, fleas, not forgetting Saint Colmán's bookish midge, whose untimely end has already been told. The always alert and observant Giraldus, who it may be remarked incidentally makes observations on the life-history of dormice, tells us that rats, which had probably gnawed his books, were cursed by the bishop, Saint Yvorus, "and thereafter none were bred there nor could exist there".⁴⁹² He refers⁴⁹³ to a larger species of mouse as very numerous, while the smaller "swarm to such amazing degree that they consume more enormous quantities of grain than anywhere else and are very destructive to clothes which they gnaw and tear however carefully they may be locked up in chests".

Saint Colmán's mouse has been already spoken of. The man-eating mice of Brendan belong with fabulous animals. The remaining stories of mice all have to do with their destructiveness, especially their depredations on stores of grain. Among these the story of the tyrant who refused grain and was cursed by Saint Comgall claims precedence.⁴⁹⁴

"*Erat quidam homo crudelis et tyrannus, durus et malignus valde de nepotibus Turtaraide, nomine Croidhe, cujus mater Luch vocabatur, quod sonat latine Mus. Cumque Fratres S. Comgalli in angustia sine frumento essent, dixerunt S. Comgallo: Ecce illud argenteum vas, quod nobis missum est in elemosynam, si placet tibi vendatur pro frumento, ut possint vivere Fratres. Tunc supradictus tyrannus Croidhe, vocatus est ad S. Comgallum, et ait ei Sanctus: Ecce argenteum vas quod Deus misit Fratribus, et da frumentum pro eo. Ille enim abundabat frumento. At ille malignus cum superbia dixit: Quod vestrum est, nolo, et quod meum, non habebitis, Mus jam vellem potius comederet frumentum quam vos. Hoc de matre dixit: Cui iratus S. Comgallus dixit: Sicut dixisti, ita fiet tibi: omne enim frumentum tuum mures comedent, et nihil tibi proficiet. Quod ita*

⁴⁹² *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 96.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.* 47.

⁴⁹⁴ *Boll* 2 Mai 583; *V S H* 2.10f.

factum est; nam duos aggeres, quos habuit ille, in quibus erant quindecim plaustra, mures comederunt, et nihil ex eis in diem tertium remansit praeter stipulas et paleas, sicut dixit sanctus Comgallus."

Surely the tyrant in this story is a not very distant relative of that abhorred 'prelat', Bishop Hatto, whom Southey took from Coryat for his *Ballad of God's Judgment on a Wicked Bishop*. The two "aggeres" (earth-cellars, no doubt, like that in the next story) equate well enough with the 'mowse-turn' in which Hatto was eaten and from whose walls and tapestry the mice "with such bitter hostility . . . scraped and gnawed out his very name" wherever it was written. The vase and the amusing play upon the mother's name form curious and interesting variants.

A glimpse of the economics of ancient Ireland is revealed in the story how some little gray furry mice were the means of relieving famine. Saint Cado lived in the time of the Great Famine. The people were in dire straits, when one day the saint noticed some mice with grains of wheat in their mouths. The saint followed the little animals and discovered to his delight a hidden granary, whose contents relieved the wants of many starving because of the famine. These earth caves were very numerous in ancient times. Walled on the inside and flagged outside, they served as hiding places for food supplies in case of raids by hostile tribes. Certain of these old earth caves, according to Baring-Gould, may still be seen in Wales and Cornwall.⁴⁹⁵

Mice are kept away from wheat that miraculously cured the sick in the monastery of Saint Ciarán of Cluain. Angels ground corn in the mill for the saint and at Ciarán's prayer it was turned into wheat. A third of the miraculous wheat was laid by for sick folk, after Saint Findian's congregation had been nourished thereon for "forty days with their nights . . . and neither mouse nor beast dared to spoil it".⁴⁹⁶

The mice of the isle of Ibdora took themselves off in impressive style after they had been cursed by Cainnech for eating holes in his sandals: "Nam omnes mures, congregacione facta,

⁴⁹⁵ O'Hanlon, *Irish Saints* 9.365,419.

⁴⁹⁶ *LS* 271.

iuxta sancti Cainnici verbum in maris profundum se precipitauerunt, et in illa insula usque hodie mures visi non sunt.”⁴⁹⁷ Likewise on an island named Aren, once consecrated by Saint Brendan, according to Giraldus,⁴⁹⁸ though really Inisgluair off the coast of Erris, County Mayo,⁴⁹⁹ there are no mice, though they swarm in great numbers in the other parts of Ireland. No mouse is bred there, nor does it live if it be introduced into the island. “Mus enim nec nascitur hic, nec vivit invecus sed si forte allatus fuerit, statim cursu praepeti in proximum mare se praecipitat sin autem impediatur [statim] emoritur.” A note by Wright says “mures” as used by Giraldus is believed by some antiquaries to mean the small black rat which abounds in Ireland.

Saint Colmán’s midge provides one striking story; Saint Moling’s fly another, much more dramatic in its tragedy. It seems that the good saint kept several pets about him like Colmán—a fly, a wren (casually introduced here, but said to be a pet in another version), and a “muriceps”. The wren has his own elements of interest, for which see the section on birds.⁵⁰⁰ The fly used to buzz and make music for Moling when he came from Matins. In time disaster fell. “Quodam die legens sanctus pontifex Molyng sedendo in quodam loco cum suo ministro, venit, ad eum illa auis que dicitur magus auium, eo quod aliquibus prebet augurium, et ipsa est minima auis; et habebat illa muscam viuam et vlulantem in rostro suo. Et in conspectu viri Dei deuorans auicula muscam, muriceps apprehendit ipsam auiculam, et statim occidit eam, et cepit acriter comedere. Videns sanctus Molyng hanc miseriam, motus est misericordia; et imperauit muricipi ut de faucibus suis auiculam remitteret. Et ilico muriceps audiens uocem sancti, cum timore et tremore mortuam et semicomestam auiculam de guttere suo in terram proiecit. Signansque sanctus pontifex cadauer auis, ipsa surrexit viuam et sana, et sanguine suo cruentata. Et imperauit ei sanctus ut muscam quam deglutiuit coram eo euomeret; et statim auicula euomit muscam, quasi fimi particulam,

⁴⁹⁷ *V S H* 1.161.

⁴⁹⁸ *Works*, ed. Dimock, 5.83.

⁴⁹⁹ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright 64.

⁵⁰⁰ See pp. 165, 166, 167.

de uentriculo suo. Et benedicens uir sanctus illud monstruolum, surrexit inde musca ualida, et circumuolabat sonans. Aus autem ad sua, gaudento garriens, euolauit. Hec uidens minister sancti Molyng, egressus est ad fratres, et hec mirabilia narrauit eis parabolice dicens: 'Ego vidi modo, fratres, resurrectionem mortuorum ex artis sepulcheris. Scientesque fratres veritatem rei, gloriam Christo dederunt.'⁵⁰¹

In a later highly sensationalized version derived from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and the *Brussels MS*,⁵⁰² Moling had living with him a madman, a fox, a wren, and a fly. The wren killed the fly by hopping on it, and the saint in wrath cursed the wren, "he that marred for me the poor fly that used to be making music for me, let his dwelling be forever in empty homes with a wet drip therein continually. And may children and young persons be destroying him". Then a "house that Jack built" sequence follows. The wren killed the fly, the fox killed the wren, the dogs of the steading killed the fox, and the cowherd killed the madman, though what the madman was killed for does not appear except to make a thoroughly dramatic climax.

Finally, Giraldus has a story about a swarm of fleas that infested a village in Connaught where stands Saint Nannan's church. At the prayer of the saint, the fleas were driven into a neighboring meadow into which neither man nor beast might venture to enter.⁵⁰³

One of the two legends about fleas in the *Lives* is from the voyage of Brendan. Fleas, "sicut arena maris in multitudine", were dispersed by the power of Brendan's prayer. "Alio in tempore peruenit ad terram cui nomen Clyach, et ibi illa nocte habitauit in loco nominato Bry Oss nomine. Et accedentes ad eum loci illius incole, dicunt: 'In magna temptatione est locus iste, nam pullices, sicut arena maris in multitudine, gignit.' Tunc homo Dei compatiens eis orauit dicens: 'Domine, libera eos ab hac molestia, qui nos in tuo nomine susceperunt.' Et sic factum est."⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ *Boll* 4 Junii 334; *V S H* 2.200.

⁵⁰² *R C* 27.303, tr. by Whitley Stokes.

⁵⁰³ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright 95.

⁵⁰⁴ *V S H* 1.140.

The second tells how Finnian of Cluain Eraird came to console the holy men of the island of Echni; they rejoiced "et nocumenta que passi sunt de passeribus et serpentibus et pulicibus ei intimarent, vir Dei compassus est afflictioni eorum et omnia nocumenta orando penitus amovit".⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ *CS* 193.

CHAPTER III

WILD ANIMALS

THE wild beasts native to Ireland, which find mention in the *Lives*, are the fox, deer, badger, wild pig, wolf, otter, whale and seal. Strictly speaking, the cattle and sheep which roamed the hills untended and fended for themselves were wild, but not in the same sense, nor were they thought of as wild in the same way, and, therefore, are not given separate treatment, while wild swine necessarily were regarded as wholly wild, and quite separate from domesticated swine. Those not native are snakes, bears, and lions. It is notable that the latter should include only these three, considering the readiness with which incredible fictions were accepted by the early hagiographers, and the opportunity which the travels, actual or attributive, of saints to foreign lands offered for striking experiences with strange beasts other than the fabulous and demonic monsters they did encounter.

Augustinus, the so-called "Irish Augustine" in his tractate *De Mirabilibus Sanctae Scripturae*, long attributed to the great Saint Augustine, gives a list of the animals in Ireland. The tractate, based on Saint Augustine's explanation of miracles, makes a most interesting attempt to rationalize the miracles of the Bible on the hypothesis that God enables the working of miracles through powers provided in nature during the original act of creation but held in reserve for the special occasions which demand miracles. The list of animals appears in his argument concerning the Flood, how it is possible that animals are found in islands separated from the mainland. The passage on animals when referred to is now quoted entire as its interest warrants. It runs as follows:¹ "Maria quoque extra terminos antiquos crescere consuescunt, et terrarum spatia diminerint

¹ *Lib* 1 vii.

atque praescindunt, sicut et senes nostro adhuc tempore viventes, vidisse se confirmant. Unde etiam insulas quae ab initio conditi orbis, ut multi affirmant, non fuerant, processu temporis faciunt, dum propinqua promontaria marinis finibus a continenti terra dividunt. Per quod intelligitur, quod illae ferae quae insularum orbibus includuntur, non humana diligentia devectae, sed in illa divisione insularum a continenti terra repertae esse probantur. Quis enim, verbi gratia, lupos, cervos, et silvaticos porcos, et vulpes, taxones, et lepuseulos, et sesqui volos in Hiberniam deveharet? Vel qualiter si tunc domestica erant, manum portantes ita effugerant, ut omnia genera haec per silvas nunc oberrare videantur?"

The list is merely illustrative and was not intended to be exhaustive, nevertheless it covers most of the animals mentioned above with the exception of otters, whales, and seals, and also hares and bats. The list is said to be the first list of the animals in Ireland, though Solinus in the third century writes,² "Illic nullus anguis, avis rara . . .".

The stories concerning snakes, bears and lions will first be taken up, followed by those concerned with animals native to Ireland. The latter are both more numerous and intrinsically of greater interest though possibly less spectacular. The courageous attitude of the early saints, illustrated in stories of Columbanus told below, may be exemplified here by the reply of Saint Gall, the famous disciple of Columbanus, when it was sought to stay him from going into the wilds. He wished to go into a desert place in order to commune with God, but was told: "Haec, O Pater, solitudo aquis est infusa frequentibus, asperitate terribilis, montibus plena praecelsis angustis vallibus flexuosa, bestiis possessa saevissimis.

"Nam praeter cervos et innocuorum greges animalium, ursos gignit plurimos apros innumerabiles, lupos numerum excedentes, rabie singulares." To whom the holy man said: "*Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?*" and that since God works all things unto good, He would deliver His servant from the hands of wild beasts.³

² *Polyhistor* 91 Cap 22 3f.

³ *Boll* 7 Oct. 875.

A. NON-NATIVE

1. *Snakes and Other Reptiles*

The famous legend of Saint Patrick's driving the snakes or all reptiles from Ireland, the peists or dragon-creatures being chained in their lairs, claims immediate precedence. It is first mentioned in the life of Jocelyn (circa 1200). The speculations regarding its origin in earlier centuries have to contend with the fact, difficult to explain, why, if then in existence and well-known, it was not included in the earlier lives. The leading facts may be briefly summarized.

Actually, there were no snakes in Ireland. Medieval writers quite excusably assumed that there were no reptiles whatsoever, but modern science records the existence of certain small lizards and a small species of toad in a distant part of Kerry. Long before Patrick's time, Solinus in his *Polyhistor* in the 3rd century, noted the absence of snakes, "illic nullis anguis".⁴ The Venerable Bede in the 8th century writes:⁵ "No reptiles are found there, and no snake can live there, for though often carried thither out of Britain, as soon as the ship comes near the shore, and the scent of the air reaches them, they die. On the contrary, almost all things in the island are good against poison. In short, we have known that when some persons have been bitten by serpents, the scrapings of leaves of books that were brought out of Ireland, being put into water, and given them to drink, have immediately expelled the spreading poison and assuaged the swelling." So likewise, Saint Donatus in his beautiful eulogy of his native land composed in Fiesole in the 9th century, beginning "Far in the west they tell of a matchless land", writes: "No poisons hurt, no serpent creeps through the grass, nor does the babbling frog croak and complain by the lake".⁶ Giraldus⁷ notes: "Inter omnia vermium genera, solis non nocivis Hibernia gaudet. Venenosis enim omnibus caret. Caret serpentibus et colubris; caret bufonibus et ranis; caret tortuis et scorpionibus."

⁴ 91 Cap 22 3f.

⁵ *Ecclesiastical History*, tr. by J. A. Giles, 1.7.

⁶ *Boll* 9 Oct. 655f.

⁷ *Works*, ed. Dimock, 5.62; cf. *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright 47f.

bus; caret et draconibus. . . . Habet tamen araneas, habet sanguisugas, habet et lacertas; sed has prorsus innocuas". He comments further on the truth of the statement, "Ranae in Gallia et Italia clamosae et garrulae, in Brittania mutae, in Hibernia nullae". Irish earth, too, he declares is inimical to snakes.⁸ Giraldus also tells a story concerning the ownership of Wales.⁹ "Est insula quaedam, inter minores insulas non modica, quae nunc Manna vocatur, antiquitus tamen Ewania dicta, medio ut asserunt libramine inter boreales Hiberniae et Britannie partes porrecta. De qua, utri terrarum applicari de jure debuerat, ab antiquis non mediocriter ambigebatur.

"Demum tamen [in hunc modum] lis ista quievit. Quoniam enimvero advectos periculi causa venenosos haec terra vermes admisit, eam Britannie applicandam communis omnium censura dictavit."

Also Holinshed in the 16th century declares:¹⁰ "No venomous creeping beast is brought forth or nourished or can liue in Ireland being brought or sent. And therefore the spider of Ireland is well known not to be venomous onelie because a frog was found living in the meadows of Waterford, somewhat before the Conquest, they construed it to import their ouerflow". He quotes the passage from Bede¹¹ that whatever came from Ireland was of "souereign vertue" against poison, and the story of the control of the Isle of Man's going to Ireland because venomous creatures breed there, as in Giraldus, adding "And contrariwise, the Orchades are adjudged to be dependant to Ireland because those islands neither breed nor foster anie venomous worm according" to Hector Boethius. Commenting on Solinus' being grossly deceived in writing that birds were rare in Ireland, he says that he might have construed "Anguis" saying Ireland lacked all venoms because it lacked two kinds—a snake and a toad.¹² Of the expelling of poisoned worms from Ireland he affirms: "The greater part (of people) father

⁸ *Ibid.* 64.

⁹ *Ibid.* 97.

¹⁰ 6,9.

¹¹ *Ecclesiastical History*, ed. Giles, 1.1f.

¹² *Hohnshed* 6.15f.

it on Saint Patrike especialle such as write his life as well apart, as in the legend of the Irish Saints''. Giraldus and *Polychronicon* (i, cap. 32) he says attribute the absence of snakes to the nature of the soil. He himself interprets the legend in this fashion: "For the cause whie St. Patrike was moved to expell all the venemous wormes out Ireland, might probablie have been conjectured to have proceeded of this; that he perceiving the land to breed no snakes thereof was accustomed, for the furthering of the Christian faith to expell other kinds of worms that lurked there before his coming, as toads, adders, blindworms, frogs, etc.''. He expresses his opinion quite naively as to the expelling of snakes by Saint Patrick—"whether Saint Patrike did expel poisoned worms out of Ireland or whether it be the nature of the soil. . . . I weigh not two chaps which waie the mind blameth because I see no inconvenience that may ensue either of the affirmative or negative opinion''.¹³

John Colgan in his *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 1645, in the Appendices to *Acta S. Patricii*, cap. 20 (12), discussed the absence of reptiles in Ireland, questioning whether the fact was due to the merits of Patrick and concluding, as a note in the Bollandist edition of the life of Saint Donatus puts it,¹⁴ "primo an Hibernia venenosis animantibus careat; et reponit: Hiberniam serpentibus, buffonibus omnisque generis animante venenoso carere, et priscei et moderni passim scriptores tradunt; quorum plura subicit testimonia.—Secundo an id obtineat etiam S. Patricii meritis? Plures quidem, quorum sententias recenset *ibidem* Colganus, ita statuerunt; ipse tamen aliter sentit, eorumque adhaeret opinioni quae non beati Patricii apostoli, nec alterius Sancti meritis, sed vel naturae soli, vel coelesti influentiae vel divini consilii, aliive occultae dispositioni hoc rarum beneficium attribuit''.

The curious "vulgar error" noted by Bede and repeated by Giraldus comes down to our own day in the belief that the soil of Ireland, no matter where found, is obnoxious to reptiles, and that handfuls of Irish earth drive snakes from English gardens,

¹³ *Ibid.* 17.

¹⁴ *Boll* 9 Oct. 659f.

while persevering efforts to plant snake colonies in Ireland until the time of Thomas Bell in 1835 have all failed.¹⁵

The first evidence of the legend explaining the absence of reptiles by Saint Patrick's agency appears in the 12th and 13th century life by Jocelyn.¹⁶ He gives a horrific description of the demonic beings in reptilian form, which will be found quoted in full below. Jocelyn thus describes the "three-fold Plagues of Hibernia": ". . . A swarm of poisonous creatures whereof the number could not be counted; a great concourse of Daemons visibly appearing; and a multitude of Evil-doers and Magicians. And these venomous and monstrous creatures, rising out of the earth and the sea, so prevailed over the whole Island, that they not only wounded men and animals with their deadly sting, but slayed them with cruel bitings, and not seldom rent and devoured their members". He records the act of Patrick thus: "And the most holy Patrick applied all his diligence unto the extirpation of this three-fold Plague; and at length by his salutary doctrine and fervent prayer, he relieved Hybernian of the encreasing mischief. Therefore, he the most excellent Pastor, bore on his shoulder the Staff of Jesus, and aided of the Angelic aid, he by its comminatory elevation gathered together from all parts of the Island all the poisonous creatures in one place:—then compelled them all unto a very high promontory which then was called Cruachan-ailge, but now Cruachon-Phadruig; and by the power of his word he drove the whole pestilent swarm from the precipice of the mountain, headlong into the Ocean.—O eminent Sign! O illustrious Miracle, even from the beginning of the world unheard; but now experienced by tribes, by peoples, and by tongues, known unto all nations, but to the dwellers in Hybernian especially needful!—And at this marvelous yet most profitable sight, a numerous assembly was present; many of whom had flocked from all parts to behold the miracles, many to receive the word of Life. Then turned he his face toward Mannia, and the other islands which he had imbued and blessed with the Faith of Christ and with the holy Sacraments; and by

¹⁵ O'Keefe, C. M., *Catholic World* 47.44.

¹⁶ P. 225f. Cf. also pp. 119, 120.

the power of his prayers, he freed all these likewise from the plague of venomous reptiles.—But other Islands, which had not believed at his preaching, still are cursed with the procreation of those poisonous creatures.”

The question at once suggests itself whether Jocelyn really had in mind natural reptiles or the demonic creatures he has described so vividly, or both, since every reptile must be under suspicion as of demonic nature. The natural supposition is that he had the demonic creatures in mind, and that he has given a special turn to the ancient legend of Patrick's contest with the demons on Croagh Patrick, as narrated, for example, in the *Tripartite Life*.¹⁷ This view is favored in general by critical authority. On the other hand, serpent-worship indubitably existed among the Celts, snakes are well known in heroic literature and in early art, huge dragon monsters, remnant of old myths, remained in Irish folk-lore, and in popular legend Patrick hewed down the great serpent idol Crom Cruach (Great Worm), casting it into the Boyne.¹⁸

Belief in such monsters, in itself a fact, would be quite independent of the presence or absence of snakes or other reptiles in Ireland, which, however, as an observed natural fact would readily be brought into connection with the legend. It is also independent of the question whether serpent-worship was prevalent in Ireland,¹⁹ as elsewhere in Celtic countries. In Scotland, where snakes are found, there are said to be remnants of rituals of propitiation. In Argyllshire the snake is curiously known as “the daughter of Edward”, and in Skye “an ribhinn”, the damsel, betraying old association with the Lamia concept, so widespread in Oriental and European belief.

Whatever the truth may be as to the origin of the legend, space may be given here to a variant and derivative of it in popular legend recorded by Joyce.²⁰ The variant tells that Saint Patrick brought all the reptiles together in one place in

¹⁷ Cf. 115.

¹⁸ Lady Gregory: *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* 6.

¹⁹ Brash: *Ecclesiastical Architecture in Ireland to the Close of the Twelfth Century* 49f.

²⁰ *Wonders of Ireland* 11f.

the west of Connaught, demons perhaps in the guise of serpents. Now the saint had the "Sweet-voice", the bell given him by the angels. He began praying and uncovering the bell, and at the first tinkle the reptiles rushed up the hill to get it from the saint, making in their rush a great chasm. Herein, they made their last stand. The saint advanced to the cliff's side, and over it rang his bell loudly, and then flung it over the beetling brow of the crag into the chasm, at which the whole band of reptiles dashed into the sea. "Lug na demon", or "Demon's Hill", is the name of their last redoubt. The peasantry say that the bell was never discovered, but Joyce says that the musical "Finn-Foya" is preserved in the Science and Art Museum, Kildare Street, Dublin, in its beautiful shrine made long after Patrick's time.

Again, it seems that after the expulsion of the snakes, the saint found that one, trickier than the rest, had escaped.²¹ This was the "Fire-spitter" (Kerhanagh), who went his wicked way, poisoning all the wells with his foul fiery breath. But Patrick was vigilant, and he struck the rock, as did Moses of old, and sweet water gushed forth. Thus refreshed, the Saint pursued the "Fire-spitter", and banished him forever from Ireland. Croagh Patrick, it may be added, because of the legends attached to it, has been for years a favorite resort of pilgrims desirous of paying honor to Ireland's Patron Saint.

Leaving Saint Patrick, it may be noted in passing that in some way Saint Brigit became associated with serpents. In the Scottish Highlands, a week before her day, February 1, the first day of the Irish spring, the snakes are obliged to leave their holes underground, and if the earth is still winter-bound, they perish.

The stories concerning snakes in the *Lives* are few, but not without interest. There is a very agreeable, if bald, account of Saint Molasius' encounter with a reptile of sorts while on a pilgrimage to Rome. Fear and horror seized the pilgrims when they saw the—to them presumably, being Irish—unfamiliar and dreadful creature. But Molasius called it to him and crumbled

²¹ Joyce, P. W., *Wonders of Ireland* 51.

bread before it, which it ate, and then licked his hand, nor did him any harm.²² The Irish saint Cuthbert freed a man from a poisonous reptile. Though the scene is not in Ireland, the story might find mention here. Once a wicked man sleeping in a field felt a serpent twine itself about his neck. He cast it to the earth, but it again wound itself around his throat. He was only freed from the reptile after he had spent three days and nights in the church of Saint Cuthbert.²³

Other saints seem to have banished poisonous reptiles from the places in which they dwelt. Adamnán relates of Columcille: "One day of the same summer-time in which he departed to the Lord," the old Columcille went to visit the brethren engaged in heavy work in the western part of the island of Iona. After speaking words of consolation to them he prophesied: "From this hour's space, the poison of no vipers shall in any wise be able to hurt either men or cattle in the lands of this island, so long as the inhabitants of this same place of our sojourning observe the commands of Christ."²⁴

The *Codex Salmanticensis* tells the coming of Saint Finnian of Cluan²⁵ to an island (which is plainly not Irish), called Echne, that he might console the holy men living there. The saint seems to have been a humble imitator of the great Saint Patrick for "Cumque illi in adventu ejus gauderent, et nocumenta que passi sunt de passeribus et serpentibus et pulicibus ei intimarent, vir Dei compassus est afflictioni eorum et omnia nocumenta orando penitus amovit. Aquam etiam de petra durissima eis impetravit."

There is a very interesting symbolic use of the serpent in three legends. An inmate of the monastery through jealousy of Saint Ailbe gave him a beaker of wine and poison. In the saint's hand the wine stood fixed in the cup, and the poison fell to the earth and became a serpent which slew Ailbe's enemy. Ailbe resuscitated him "et serpens ille, reuersus in venenum est, ne

²² *V S H* 2.136.

²³ *Capg* 1.237.

²⁴ Adamn 79f; *Boll* 2 Junii 180.

²⁵ *C S* 193.

plus noceret hominibus''.²⁶ The second occurs in the *Life* of Saint Brigit.²⁷ Brigit went to visit Yborus and they ate "panem et lardum in Quadregesima" before the Paschal season. Two virgins of the company of Brigit would not eat the bacon "et ille partes versae sunt in duos serpentes. Hoc quando nuntiatum est S. Brigidae illas Virgines graviter coram Yboro Episcopo increpavit, et jussit eas foras manere, et jejunaere cum lachrymis; dixitque Brigida: Jejunemus et nos cum illis et oremus Dominum; et ita fecerunt. Et versi sunt isti duo serpentes in duas Eucharistias in Pascha et in Natalitiis Domini''.²⁸ When Saint Patrick set forward to visit Milcho, his former master, he hoped to convert the pagan, grown old in his evil ways. Milcho, fearing that the preaching of Patrick might penetrate even his breast of stone and holding it "base and shameful" to accept the doctrine of one who had been his servant, when he saw "the Priest of the Most High" approaching, "gathered together all his substance and cast it into the fire; then throwing himself on the flames, made himself a Holocaust for the infernal Demons. And the Holy Prelate, beholding from a neighboring mountain the deadly end of this wicked Prince, saw his soul in the form of a fiery serpent plunged into Hell."'²⁹

Ireland may have no snakes, but it can concoct delightful stories about them. We may conclude with such a story of the devil in his traditional guise as a serpent. The wright who built the Ark had left a nailhole unfilled in it, as he knew that he himself would not be taken in it! Noah and his children entered. Noah raised his hand to bless the vessel. Now the Devil, who had gone in beside him as he entered, found no way out to escape this blessing. Only the empty hole that the wright had left unclosed remained. He went into it in the form of a serpent, but so tight was the hole that he could neither go out nor come back. And there he stayed until the flood ebbed. "And that was the worst and best nail in the ark."³⁰

²⁶ *CS* 242; *V S H* 1.50.

²⁷ *Boll* 1 Feb. 125.

²⁸ *Boll* 1 Feb. 125; *CS* 67; cf. p. 40f.

²⁹ Jocelyn 49.

³⁰ *Ériu* 5.49 (tr. by O. J. Bergin).

2. Lions

Lions were certainly not met with by the saints either in Ireland or on the continent. They stray into the *Lives* from earlier hagiographical literature, or directly from classical anecdote or possibly fable, to act a decidedly spectacular part in the few stories in which they appear.

Saint Finnian to win over the heathen populace in a city "juxta Italiam", came out of the forest accompanied by two lions, a lion and a lioness apparently, and carrying their cubs. "Duo insuper leones de silua proxima, viro sancto precedente, venientes, ipsum catulos eorum in sinu portantem quasi vacce vitulos coram omni populo sequebantur per ciuitatem. Si enim hoc faceret, Deo suo se credituros spoponderunt. Insuper et virum quendam ab eis occisum vite restituit." ³¹

A similar story is told of Saint Brendan.³² Saint Brendan wēnt to Saint Gildas in Britain to ask him how he should do penance for his punishment of Dobarchú in changing him into an otter because of his killing of the saint's oxen. Gildas sent him into a desert where dwelt a lion and a lioness, that every day came to molest the people. Brendan accepted the British saint's word as a command to penitence and proceeded with his minister Colmacho into the desert. At the noon hour they came upon the haunt of the beasts. The lioness was sleeping and when aroused "rugitum magnum dedit". The lion immediately joined her. "Et mandauit, uir Dei leonibus, ut secum ad ciuitatem properarent. O mira uirtus omnipotentie Dei! qui leones feroces fecit uoci hominis sic obedire ut eum ad ciuitate sequerentur, sicut canes domestici solent dominos suos sequi. Et cum ciues mortem illorum potius quam uitam expectarent, ecce respiciunt eos sanos redire, et leones per ordinem eorum uestigia sequentes. Tunc ciues ascendentes equos et currus ad loca tutiora fugerunt, timentes, quod sepe eis euenit, feritatem silicet leonum; precepit homo Dei leonibus, ut non nocerunt ciuibz set potius eos defenderent pro uiribus. Quod et leones fecerunt. Nam sicut canes domestici apud illos pascebantur; et quasi pastores

³¹ *Capg* 1.445.

³² *V S H* 1.142.

custodiebant peccora eorum." Gildas begged Brendan to accept him as his disciple and remain there, for the judgment of Brendan was in God's hands. But Brendan departed with Gildas' blessing to his own country. This story, a stock theme in hagiographic literature, has a parallel with wolf in place of lion.³³

For a truly sensational use of the lion, however, with successive cumulative additions, one must go to the life of Saint Ailbe. In the simplest version a lion, "fortissimus de silvis", seized a man from the camp and was fleeing to devour him. Ailbeus said, "Quamvis illum nobis non videntibus occidisti, cadaver tamen ejus coram oculis nostris noli comedere". The lion obeyed, "virum mortuum ex ore suo quasi ignem projecit", and running quickly "et quasi veniam postulans de viro occisso, pedes sancti Albei humiliter lambere cepit". Then Saint Ailbeus prayed and the dead man arose "vividus et sanus".³⁴ The version in the *Acta Sanctorum* improves greatly upon this.³⁵ Two lions devour the horses of the King, and cower down at the feet of Ailbe. The King asks him to cast the lions forth, to whom the saint replies, rather astonishingly in view of the repast they have enjoyed, "Nolite dimittere eos vacuos a conspectu tuo; sed da eis hospitium, equi enim de ore ipsorum erepti sunt. Tribue illis ergo centum equos, ut a tuis finibus sine nocumento aliquo recedant." The King declared he had not that many horses, whereupon a cloud came, and through an opening one hundred horses dropped to earth. Then Ailbe said to the lions: "Equos istos ante vos in eremum minate, et eos ibi, ut vobis placuerit, devorate." Yet again in a third version:³⁶ "Tunc venerunt tres fortissimi leones de silvis, et irruentes in castra, vnus ex eis occidit virum vnum; et duo occiderunt duos equos regis. Volentes quoque deuorare eos, acceperunt eos inter dentes. Tunc fugerunt omnes timore leonum. Videns autem sanctus Albeus hanc miseriam, dixit leonibus: 'Quamuis istos occidistis, nobis non videntibus, cadauera tamen coram oculis nostris nolite comedere.' Statim vero leones obedientes illa cor-

³³ See p. 135.

³⁴ *CS* 239.

³⁵ *Boll* 4 Sept. 28.

³⁶ *VSH* 1.48.

pora de ore suo proiecerunt; et [ad] sanctum Albeum velociter leones adcurrunt mites, et, quasi veniam postulantes de illis occisis, sancti Albei pedes humiliter lingebant. Orante autem sancto Albeo, vir ille mortuus surrexit viuus. Tunc dixit rex ad sanctum Albeum: 'O sancte Dei, scio quia nichil tibi impossibile est per Deum tuum; rogo ergo te, ut in nomine omnipotentis binos equos meos, quos valde diligo, resuscites.' Audiens sanctus Albeus illum rogantem in nomine Dei omnipotentis, signo sancte crucis signauit equos, et ilico surrexerunt. Bened[ix]itque leones, qui lingebant pedes eius, et suis comis quasi linteo peregrini sancti Albei pedes leniter tergebant. Rex dixit sancto Dei: 'Fac leones istos, ne huc iterum veniant.' Tunc beatus Albeus ait ei: 'Noli eos a tuo conspectu vacuos dimittere ad loca sua. Ecce equi tui de ore eorum erepti sunt, volentes eos comedere, Deo permittente. Tribue ergo illis modo prandium, ut semper recedant a finibus tuis.' Tunc rex ait: 'Non habeo modo in promptu, quod vellem sibi dare.' Tunc assumpsit sanctus Albeus prefectum regis secum in montem sibi propinquum; cumque ibi Dominum orasset, ecce nubes magna a culmine celi descendit vsque ad terram, et ipsa nubes attulit aptum prandium leonibus. Tunc dixit sanctus Dei leonibus: 'Ferte hoc vobiscum in heremum, et ibi comedite.' Et ita fecerunt leones, sicut dictum est illis."

3. Bears

Bears, if they once existed in Ireland, as is assumed, in common with all the mountainous districts of Europe, had vanished, even beyond memory, before the coming of Christianity.

In the life of the great Saint Columbanus, which is of such peculiar value and interest as written so shortly after his death, three experiences of his with bears are related near his monastery or while in temporary seclusion in the forest solitudes of Anegray in the Vosges. Desiring to make a cave, he had come upon the place of his retreat, and found a she-bear in occupation. She at once obeyed his command and left the cave for his use.³⁷ Again in the dense fruit thickets of Luxeuil, he fore-

³⁷ Migne, P. L. 87; Jonas "Life of Columbanus", *Translations and Reprints* 2 No. 7-9ff.

bade a bear to injure the hide of a slain stag which was needed to make shoes for the brethren. The bear fawned at his feet and departed.³⁸ Once more near Bregenz at a time when the saint and the brethren were eating the wild fruit of certain trees or bushes called "bolluca", a bear came and pulled down the fruit from the thickets where they grew, naturally spoiling many and depleting the supply. Saint Columbanus bade his followers mark off a special portion for the bear. This they did with the saint's staff, and the fierce bear kept scrupulously within the part of the trees and bushes assigned to him.³⁹

Saint Gallus, beloved disciple and friend of Saint Columbanus, penetrated with his deacon into the wilds, seeking a place in which to serve God. The sun set just as Gall finished his prayer, and after partaking of the bread and water and fish provided for them, the two stretched themselves on the ground to rest. But after a while, Gall arose and prayed cross-vigil. "Interea descendens ursus de monte micas et fragmenta quae convivantibus deciderant, caute legebat." The man of God seeing this, said to the beast, "Praecipio tibi, bestia, in nomine Domini, tolle lignum et mitte in ignem." At his command the beast dragged a great log and threw it into the fire. Then Gall commanded the beast again, "In nomine Domini mei Jesu Christi ab hac valle discede, et hoc pacto montes et colles circumpositos habeto communes, ut nullum hic hominem, nil de pecoribus laedas.' Dum haec agerentur, diaconus dormire se simulans, quod vir Deo charus gessit cum bestia considerabat: et surgens prostravit se ad pedes ejus, et dixit: 'Nunc scio vere Dominum esse tecum, quoniam et bestiae eremi obediunt tibi.' Ille autem dixit ei: 'Cave ne omnino hoc alicui dixeris, donec videas gloriam Dei.'" ⁴⁰

B. NATIVE

The list of native animals mentioned in the *Lives* number but eight: wolves, deer, foxes, wild pigs, badgers, otters, whales and seals. It is not surprising that it is so short, for Ireland had

³⁸ *Ibid.* 16.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 38.

⁴⁰ Migne, P. L.: 114; Walafrid Strabo, *Life of Saint Gall*, 987f.

few notable mammals and the inclusion of any special beast is largely a matter of accident. Even at that, the list is somewhat curious as regards inclusion and omission. One can understand the inclusion of the deer and wolf, but why not such common animals so familiarly known as the hare, rabbit, squirrel, even if not the hedgehog, weasel, stoat, vole, polecat, bat?

If the badger and the otter, why not the marten, specially prized for its fur, and the wild-cat, even if not the beaver, if it existed in Ireland as in Britain? If the otter and seal, why not the porpoise and why but a single story of whales, always exciting interest as seen along the coast or cast up on the shore? One might suppose they would appear in some way in the accounts of the saints' adventurous journeys to Britain or the continent—and more than merely once in Brendan's wonderful voyage.⁴¹

It is certainly a curious chance that hares and rabbits did not find mention among the friends of anchorites or monks in temporary seclusion. Giraldus speaks of great numbers of hares resembling rabbits.⁴² The sinister reputation of the hare existed in Irish as in English folk-lore, at least locally, from some indeterminate period. No trace of it appears in the popular legend of Saint Mona.⁴³ Saint Mona rescued a hare pursued by hounds, checking with finger upraised the hounds' approach, while the huntsman's horn was glued to his lips. The Irish children call the timid hares "Saint Mona's lambs", and if they see a hare being chased, pause in their play to murmur a prayer: "God and Saint Mona succor thee!" The story has been charmingly told by Miss Agnes Repplier.⁴⁴

There was a small animal in primitive Ireland called *togmall*, mentioned in old Irish stories. O'Curry makes it a squirrel, but these animals were not native to Ireland, having been intro-

⁴¹ Giraldus says, "Ferarum quoque, quas occidentales pariunt regiones, cunctas fere species continet ista". *Works*, ed. by Dimock, 5.57. He also notes the absence of other animals: "Defectum vero et aliarum quarundam patitur insula ferarum. Caret enim capreis, caret et damis; caret ericiis, caret erminis, caret et putaciis", *ibid.* 59.

⁴² *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 43.

⁴³ Baring-Gould, Reverend S.: *Lives of the Saints* 16.225.

⁴⁴ *Catholic World* 40.326.

duced only in later times. The *togmall* was tamed as a pet and carried on the shoulder. In the *Colloquy*, *togmall*s, "particolored squirrels", from Berraman (in Kerry) were included as among the food of the Fena.⁴⁵ Squirrel-skins are also enumerated in a *Libel of English Policie* in the 15th century.⁴⁶ The squirrel does not appear, except once in the description of Columbanus' life on the continent, where Jonas declares that Chamnoald, the royal chaplain at Laon, witnessed the tenderness of the great Irish *peregrinus* to wild beasts and birds. "Chamnoald said he had often seen him call the little animal, which men commonly call a *squiruis*, from the tops of high trees and take it in his hand and put it on his neck and let it go into and come out from his bosom."⁴⁷

Mention has been made above of the somewhat curious fact that references to the use of furs, skins, and leather are notably few in the *Lives*. They are more numerous, but still few, in the case of wild beasts, although there is ample evidence elsewhere that they were largely used. Here it may be noted that the "western John the Baptist", Ciarán of Saighir, "never wore woolen clothing but skins of wolves and other brute beasts",⁴⁸ while Colmán MacDuach and his clerk during years of fasting in solitude wore skins of wild beasts. Aed(Maedoc) also was "indutus pellibus uulpium".⁴⁹ There is evidence also for the use of skins and furs of foxes, badgers, otters, and seals. There are, of course, frequent references to furs and skins in secular literature, and they, doubtless, formed an important article of export earlier than the 15th century when referred to in the *Libel of English Policie*.

1. Wolves

The wolf was the largest, most powerful and savage carnivore in early Ireland, the only animal to be accounted a serious and

⁴⁵ *Silva Gad* 2.119 (from the *Book of Lismore*).

⁴⁶ Joyce: *Social History* 2.433.

⁴⁷ Migne, P. L., 87; Jonas "Life of Columbanus," *Translations and Reprints* 2, No. 7 18; *Capp.* 1.209.

⁴⁸ *B N nE* 2.118.

⁴⁹ *VSH* 2.308; *B N nE* 2.226.

constant menace to man and to lower animals, domestic and wild. The wolf seems to have been regarded with a mingled dread and fascination, and quite naturally plays a notable part in folk-tale and folk-tradition. Certain traces still remaining seem to suggest a somewhat well-developed cult, rites of propitiation and the like, in pagan Ireland, as well as the belief in lycanthropy common to Europe and Asia in various forms.⁵⁰

The evidence is suggestive rather than definite. The chief support of a possible wolf-cult is Camden's somewhat cryptic statement, "Lupos sibi adseiscunt in patrimonios, quos *chari* Christ appellant, pro eis orantes et bene precantes, et sic se ab illis laedi non uerentur."⁵¹ In secular literature Conaire the Great⁵² is said to have had seven wolves as hostages, that no harm should be done to more than one calf throughout the byres of Ireland. In the *Lives* there is a record of a covenant with wolves. Colmán Mac Lúachain had a standing covenant. The wolves came and licked his shoes like domestic dogs, and he said to them, "Be here continually; and the day my name is mentioned to you in intercession, you must not commit raven (lit. 'reddening') on anyone."⁵³

Because of his exceptional character, the wolf appears in more stories in the *Lives* than any other wild animal, the deer, possibly, being his only rival. The miraculous power of the saints is constantly called upon to offset losses which herds and flocks suffer through his depredations. In a number of stories already noted in treating of domestic animals, the wolf plays a minor part, the motive of the story being the restoration or replacement of the animal he has made his prey. In others, the wolf becomes of equal or major interest. The theme is one that recurs again and again in various forms.

⁵⁰ Cf. O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, 2.60; Joyce, P. W., *Social History* 1.297f; Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths* 2.119f. Plummer, *VSH* 1.cxlii, *RC* 2.202, ed. by Whitley Stokes, lists earliest authority for the existence of lycanthropy in Ireland, a passage in *Lebor na huidre*, 36b; the second earliest, *Book of Glenn-da-locha* cited in *Book of Ballymote*, 140f in *Irish Nennius*, 204.

⁵¹ *Brittania* (1607) 791, Gibson's Transl. (1722) 2.1420.

⁵² *RC* 22.167f, "Destruction of Dá Derga's Hostel" (from *LU*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

⁵³ *VSH* 1.cxlii (from *Rennes Ms.*).

For example in certain stories, a famished wolf or pack is fed by the saint's generosity. This becomes a stock motive in the case of the boy-herd willingly yielding a calf, or other animal from those he is tending.⁵⁴ When Patrick was a little boy, he was entrusted with the care of his foster-mother's sheep. One day a wolf rushed from the neighboring wood, caught up a ewe-lamb and carried it away. His foster-mother blamed Patrick greatly, who poured forth his prayers for the lamb's restoration. The next morning when he brought his flock to pasture, the wolf ran up carrying the lamb in his mouth and laid it down at Patrick's feet, "God's name and Patrick's are magnified hereby."⁵⁵ Eight wolves were fed by Maedoc with eight sheep from his flock, the sheep being later resuscitated by his prayers.⁵⁶ The story of Ailbe's befriending a she-wolf has been given in full above.⁵⁷ A wolf is fed again and in a different way by Saint Maedoc.⁵⁸ When he came to the monastery of Shanbo at the foot of Mount Leinster, there met him a wolf "wretched, weak, starving". Maedoc asked the lad who had joined him on the way if he had any food. The boy had a fish and a loaf, but for fear of his master, was loath to bestow them on a hungry wolf. Yielding to Maedoc's entreaties, however, the boy gave both. "Bring me some of the leaves of the wood," commanded Maedoc. The boy brought the leaves and the saint blessed them, and they were changed into a fish and a loaf. The story of Saint Molua's hospitality is reserved for special mention below.⁵⁹

In several stories, the wolf replaces the calf he has eaten by bringing a little hind to replace the calf and comfort the bereaved mother. One of these is motivated by an evident borrowing from the story of Androcles. The wolf, escaping to the woods after eating a calf, stepped on a thorn. Saint Boecius "red[d]ens bonum pro malo, sudem de pede lupi leniter extraxit, ac crucis signum, uulneri inprimens confestim illud

⁵⁴ See pp. 14, 15 *supra*.

⁵⁵ *L S* 151; Jocelyn 10.

⁵⁶ *V S H* 2.142, 296; *C S* 464f; *Capg* 1.18f.

⁵⁷ See p. 15.

⁵⁸ *V S H* 2.149f; 2.302f.

⁵⁹ See p. 137.

sanauit". The grateful wolf returned with a little hind, which Boecius blessed and "the bereaved mother" loved the little hind as she had her only calf.⁶⁰ Again, a fawn was called from its mother in the forest by Saint Colmán of Dromore that he might act as a calf to a "mother-cow", suggesting rapine by a wolf.⁶¹

In a number of stories of special interest, the wolf does not merely bring back the stolen calf or replace it, but himself acts the calf to comfort the mother. In one the motive of the hind just referred to is combined cleverly with that of the wolf itself serving as fosterling. In the life of Berach⁶² the mother-cow takes her grief more to heart. "Protinus mater uituli horribiles mugitus dabat ac huc illucque discurrens quasi insana ferebatur." But Berach prayed and a wonderful thing happened. The wolf, losing his ferocity, returned to the mooing cow, and offered himself as a calf; she caressed him, giving her milk abundantly. The power of God had converted the ferocity of the wolf into gentleness and he remained not as a wolf, but as a calf thereafter serving the cow. When Coemgen was with the hermit Beanus and their hearts were moved by the distress of a mother-cow whose calf had been taken, the holy hermit bade Coemgen go "in nomine Domini Iesu Christi ut cicius adiuues tristem illius mentem". Out into the forest went the saint, called the wolf to him and bade him, "omni hora mulgendi congrua cotidie, usque dum alium partum habeat, simili modo uenias", and he added, "Ipsa enim te amabit Dei potestate, quamuis sit contra naturam".⁶³ Saint Cainnech's wolf came for the same purpose, "cum humilitate et penitentia", morning and evening at milking-time "et ex illa die in eternum fecit sanctus pacem inter luppos et peccora in illo loco (Cluoin Bronich) simul habitantes, et non nocebant".⁶⁴ The story of the wolf made to serve as calf to a mother-cow in the life of Saint Féchin offers some different details. When the saint called him after he had eaten the calf, he came "ac signa obedientie cauda et auribus, prout

⁶⁰ *V S H* 1.90, 94.

⁶¹ *C S* 834.

⁶² *Boll* 2 Feb. 835; *V S H* 1.77f.

⁶³ *Boll* 1 Junii 307; *V S H* 1.238f.

⁶⁴ *C S* 390f.

potuit, ostendit''. Then Féchín put a rope around his neck and looked about for a place to which to tie the animal . . . "non videns, Spiritu reuelante ad lapidem sibi vicinum accurrens, lupum una manu tenuit, et lapidem digito alterius manus perforauit, et ipsum ibidem ligauit''. At the usual hour of milking the cows came to the wolf thus tied and gave their milk quite docilely. The stone perforated by the finger of the saint may be seen even until this day!⁶⁵ The life of Saint Gerald has a clever blending of the hind and wolf motive. A wolf ate the calf of the monastery cow. Then the mother-cow for grief would not give her milk. "'Interfector uituli in loco eius adueniat, et uicem eius suppleat.''' The wolf came and the cow loved him as her own calf. But when the wolf rebelled according to its nature, from the nearby mountain the wolf stole a fawn from its mother and placed it with the cow. The mother-deer followed to the monastery, and there remained until the end of her life.⁶⁶ From this incident the monastery took its name Elitheria, "cerua enim in Hibernico sonat idem quod elitt''.

This motive of fosterhood is in several stories combined with that of a wolf's being made to serve as herd to domestic animals. Saint Finan⁶⁷ came to a religious man named Mokelloc who lived in a certain place having with him two cows with one calf, the other having been devoured by a wolf. One of Finan's family said, "The calf would not have perished had Fintan been in his place." His charioteer said to the saint, "A wolf devoured the calf belonging to Mokelloc." Finan went to the church and prayed, and afterward bade Mokelloc to go to his milking-cows. When the man came to the cow-pasture, a wolf appeared "cum humilitate et penitentia" in place of the calf and stood docilely before the cows, and the bereaved cow caressed him as her own calf. Knowing this Finan said, "It is not enough that the wolf stand as a calf before the cows, but he must go and seek the calf he has devoured." The next day the wolf returned with a white calf with red ears, the very calf that had been brought forth by Mokelloc's cow. "Dixit Finanus

⁶⁵ *V S H* 2.77f.

⁶⁶ *V S H* 2.110.

⁶⁷ *C S* 316f; *V S H* 2.94.

sancto Mukelloe: 'Cum effete fuerint tue vacce, non erit tecum vitulus iste albus. Lupus vero iste quasi canis modestus erit custos vitulorum tuorum usque ad mortem suam, et non nocebit ulli animali.''' The wolf's penance is more extensive in the story of Saint Modwenna.⁶⁸ With the saint's staff, her shepherd Lughe made the wolf come to Modwenna as a tame dog, shame-faced, as if conscious of his guilt "vt ad vaccam cuius vitulum deuorasti pergas et illam a bestiis custodias, ducens ad pascua et reducens; de siluestribus uiue, quicquam domesticum non comedas, nec amplius cuiquam homini dampnum facias''. The wolf obeyed, and the cow loved him as her own calf. Moreover, "Ex illo lupi propagati vsque in presentem diem per tria miliaria ecclesia pecora custodiunt. Sunt enim minores ceteris et albas in frontibus notas habent; nulla domestica ledentes, sed de siluestribus victum queritantes."

This story is certainly of exceptional interest as pointing to a belief in the origin of the domestic dog from tamed wild animals.

The herding of domestic animals by wolves appears in a number of stories. Saint Abbán in whose life wolves play such a part, bade the wolves let the flocks alone and tend them.⁶⁹ The herds who kept the cattle, wishing to play awhile, left the animals in the care of the holy man himself, who was even then seated in his cell. Meanwhile the wolves came to the herds, and Abbán, seeing them through God's power, said to them, "Dimittite et custodite. . . . Diuina uero potencia lupi uocem sancti sedentis in cella sua longe per aera audientes, non solum peccora dimiserunt, set eadem usque ad obitum suum custodiebant." It was spread through all the region that the wolves kept Abbán's sheep, hence arose the saying: "Per Abbanum, qui fecit lupos custodire uac[c]as." Then the brothers realized the truth of the prophet's words, " 'Lupus cum agno habitabit', quia illi non solum ad boues mites facti sunt, set ad cetera animalia''. Nor was it ever after necessary to have herds for the saint's cattle, for the wolves performed that office. The legend concludes with the significant remark, "Non mihi minus miran-

⁶⁸ *Boll* 2 Julii 245; *Capg* 2.199f.

⁶⁹ *B N nE* 2.8.

dum esse videtur, quod nemo Christianus inventus est, qui noceret illis in vita sua, per gratiam eiusdem viri Dei, quam ipsi luppi suam escam non tangere.”⁷⁰ Saint Munnu promised his father that if he let him read with the servants of God, no wolf should ever harm his cattle. Tulchanus agreed, and the next day he went to see where his cattle were, and “vidit duos lupos custodientes peccora sua uelut canes communes”. Then he remembered the boy’s words. “Ab illo ergo die, quamdiu fuit Tulchanus secularis, peccora sua lupi custodiebant.”⁷¹ Wolves also acted as swineherds for Saint Brigit.⁷² Coming off her journey, she saw wolves from the woods and the wide plains of the Liffey “idonei pastores in coactis et minandis suibus laborabant, advenientibus missis relinquentes eas unlaesas; mirabilique hoc eventu intellecto, et consueto more discesserunt. Et sic altero die ii qui missi erant cum suibus, factum mirabile narrantes, domum veversi sunt.”⁷³

In these stories the wolf plays a somewhat tame part, but his ferocity, his power to menace man himself, is not left unused. In the life of the great Columbanus, intrinsically absorbing and so precious because of its early date and its provenience, there is a most striking passage describing how as the saint was passing through a certain dark forest, twelve wolves, lurking there, parted in silence until Columbanus was well in the midst of them. They came near, seized his garments, but as the saint stood firm and prayed, the animals left him in peace. Voices of plundering Suevi were heard close by, but they, too, passed on. This experience followed a meditation in which the saint had decided it were better to suffer injuries from wild beasts than from men whose violence would be accounted sin. Because of this meditation, Columbanus did not know clearly whether this experience was some of the devil’s deceit, or whether it was an actual occurrence.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *Boll* 12 Oct. 287; *V S H* 1.22f; *B N n E* 2.8.

⁷¹ *V S H* 2.226f.

⁷² *Boll* 1 Feb. 134, 137f.

⁷³ Cf. *C S* 316f.

⁷⁴ Migne, P. L. 87; Jonas “Life of Columbanus”, *Translations and Reprints* No. 2 7-9; *Capg* 1.208.

A legend concerning Saint Brendan, not in our chosen authorities as related by Canon O'Hanlon,⁷⁵ may here be given in further illustration. It will be noted that it closely parallels the story of Finnian and his lions. Saint Brendan remained with Saint Gildas at Llancharvan in Wales three days and three nights when the great saint of Clonfert was doing penance for his impetuosity in changing Dorbarchú into an otter. Gildas told him of the fierce animals that prowled around the city, saying that it was granted by the Almighty that Brendan should drive them away, "for by such sign you shall know that the sin which conducted you hither shall be pardoned". Taking his disciple Talmach, Brendan went out and saw a she-wolf sleeping with her cubs. Brendan commanded, "Follow us tamely with your young!". Behold, the wolf and her little ones followed the saint, as if they were docile house-dogs. Gildas saw the strange cavalcade at the monastery gate and thanked God for His wonderful works. Brendan commanded the wolves to retire into the desert and to molest no one.

In the striking tale of the two Ciaráns, the wolf is made the instrument through which an evil deed is avenged. Crichid of Cluain, Ciarán's farmer, went to Saighir, remaining there a long time. The devil tempted him to quench the hallowed fire the monks kept in the kitchen. Ciarán of Saighir declared he would not partake of food until guests came and brought it to him. Then the gillie Crichid went outside a short distance from the monastery and wolves killed him, "but they did not destroy his body". Ciarán of Cluain went to Saighir to ask for his gillie. Ciarán the Elder said to him, "This is the first thing ye need, warm water over your feet", explaining they had no fire to heat it. "But give ye as guests fire unto us, for unto you hath God decreed it." Ciarán the Wright prayed and fire came from heaven and rested on his breast. He brought the fire into the monastery. Then he brought to life his gillie "and partook of dinner" along with them. Then "the Ciaráns made their union. 'The wealth of the world', saith Ciarán, son of the Wright, '[be] in great Saighir', 'Wisdom and dignity without decay in

⁷⁵ *Irish Saints* 5.445.

Clonmacnois', saith Ciarán of Saighir.'''⁷⁶ In the Latin version⁷⁷ one learns that the gillie bore the scars of the wolves' teeth long after the wound was healed, and that the gillie's being raised from the dead was due to Ciarán of Saighir.⁷⁸ In the Irish life⁷⁹ the malediction is pronounced on the offender by the elder Ciarán possibly as a means of glorifying him over Ciarán of Cluain. In the life of Ciarán of Saighir in *Silva Gadelica*⁸⁰ there is only the mere mention of "the accursed child Crichid's being killed by wolves".⁸¹

Two stories deserve special attention. They are extremely striking examples of the ready acceptance by the hagiographers of the possibility, because of the special power and grace committed to the saints, of close understanding and sympathy between them and the lower animals, a sympathy that expresses itself in benevolence to all living things, even so harmful and dangerous an animal as the wolf. In the first of these stories, this relation is motivated by gratitude on the part of the saint because of circumstances attending his infancy. In the lives of two saints the Romulus and Remus theme appears. One of these is Barre of Cork. Three lives of Saint Barre were rejected by the Bollandists as too fabulous to print. It was, perhaps, from one of these or some version of them that Canon O'Hanlon⁸² drew the legend of Barre's parentage. Cast out at birth to be devoured by wild beasts, a she-wolf suckled him. Found by swine-herds, he was brought to their chief Amergin, who recognized his son and retired with him to Hualíathain, the present Barrymore in Cork.⁸³ The same motive appears in elaborated form in the life of Saint Ailbe, the patron saint of Munster.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ *LS* 277.

⁷⁷ *VSH* 1.212f.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 230f.

⁷⁹ *BNNE* 2.107.

⁸⁰ 2.15 (*Egerton* from *Codex Kilkenniensis*, John Colgan).

⁸¹ See also *Capg* 2.322; cf. O'Donnell, *Manus*, *Betha Colaim Chille* 289, where Columcille prophesies that Cormac's body will be devoured by wolves because of the latter's insistence.

⁸² *Irish Saints* 9.551.

⁸³ *VSH* 1.65.

⁸⁴ *Boll* 4 Sept. 27f; see pp. 84, 137.

Ailbe was the son of Ol Chú, "great hound", and the maid-servant Sandrith. He was born in the house of Cronán, Lord Eliogarty. The babe was not permitted to be brought into the house and was left on a stone, but a wolf came and "ipse hunc Infantem inter catulos lupinos nutriri fecit". Lochanus took him home and the wolf returned to seek the child. "Vade in pace, quia Puer de cetero erit apud me, et non relinquam eum tecum". Afterwards the boy was given to British Christians who named him Helveus, Alveus, or Albeo, after the stone or rock on which the babe had been found by the wolves. Now when the wolves later on were being driven from Aran, they fled to Albeus for protection. To whom the saint said, "Noli timere amplius quia nullus tibi nocere audebit, ego enim merito protector tuus esse debeo quia in diebus infantiae meae, cum me homines sprevisent, et feris me devorandum exposuissent, a vobis cum magna lenitate nutritus sum. Vada ergo securo, ad locum uude venisti et tu cum semine tuo de cetero nulli noceas; hora vero refectionis quotidie ad me venias cum tuis fratribus, ut panem mecum comedatis. Quod complebat fera, quotidie veniendo cum suis catulis numero quatuor et sumebat refectionem cum viro Dei et fratribus." In the *Codex Salamanticensis*⁸⁵ this is the wolf that came and hid its head under Albeus' cowl for protection, and in the *Vita* edited by Plummer⁸⁶ hid her little ones on his breast.

In the second story, it is originally pity for wolves, in extremity from famine, that starts an extended friendship, signalized by a yearly commemoration feast for the wolves on the saint's part and helpful service voluntarily rendered by the wolves in grateful recognition. "Quodam die sanctus pater Molua iuit videre armentum monasterii sui; et vidit prope viam inter arbusta lupos esurientes et clamantes in celum. Et motus misericordia, ac[c]ersiuit illos secum, et collocavit in hospicio, lauit pedes eorum, et fecit vitulum occidi et coqui, et traditus est eis cum omni humanitate. Et tale convivium anniuersario more sanctus Molua faciebat lupis. Postea lupi alacres cepe-

⁸⁵ P. 258.

⁸⁶ *V S H* 1.62f.

runt custodire peccora sancti Molua ab aliis lupis et a furibus; et erant quasi domestici cum pastoribus sancti cognoscentes se invicem; et multis diebus post obitum sancti Molua hoc illi lupi faciebant.”⁸⁷ It will be noted that the legend is curiously illustrative of the treatment of travellers arriving at a monastery, for the self-same offices were performed for them.

Wolves are mentioned as pets and fined “like domestic dogs” in the *Brehon Laws*.⁸⁸

The use of skins and furs for clothing has already been touched upon. Ciarán wore the skins of wolves and other wild beasts, and Aidán also. The story in which this fact appears is well worth telling because of its human interest. One day Saint Aidus went out to wash his hands at the fountain. One of the brothers seeing him said that no one was able to move him to discord, “erat autem Aidus indutus pellibus uulpium”. Then a brutish man among them cast Saint Aidus into the fountain. To whom the saint said: “Brucior es, iuuenis, de isto opere”. The clothing of the saint was dry without a drop of water on it. Seeing this the young man repented, whereupon Saint Aidus responded, “Bene fecisti agendo penitenciam; nam si non peniteres, terra te absorbuisset. Nunc celem habebis et quadragesimo die morieris”.⁸⁹

2. Deer

Deer were plentiful in primitive Ireland. They were valued for hunting, for food, for hide and horns, even kept on occasion for pets. Giraldus in his time says the stags were so fat they lost their speed and “the more slender they are in shape, the more nobly they carry their heads and branching antlers”.⁹⁰

There are many casual allusions to deer in the *Lives*. The miracles in which they appear include several of singular charm or strangeness. The motives which are frequently repeated are the use of deer as milch animals, as draught animals, less frequently as beasts of burden, and of the does as substitutes for the calves of bereaved mothers.

⁸⁷ *V S H* 2.217f.

⁸⁸ 4.115.

⁸⁹ *V S H* 2.308.

⁹⁰ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 43.

The references to the use of venison as food are not many. In the following tale of Saint Magnenn ⁹¹ a deer providentially supplied him and his company when in need by an untimely end. Magnenn with his clerics had visited Aran, the great monastic school of Saint Enda called "Aran of the Saints", where no less than one hundred-twenty saints lie buried. Enda had made friends with the saints, and they were returning home. Benighted and without food, his people said to Magnenn, "Holy cleric, pity it is for us this night that we are not in Tallaght, where we might have tonight's sufficiency, and we so sharp set". Magnenn replied to the spokesman: "Young man, never say it, seeing God succors both poor and rich". With that the baying of hounds was heard; they chased a deer, which when it drew near the holy clerics "fetched a desperate sudden leap — and broke its neck!" Magnenn exclaimed, "Deo gratias! Temperately eat and to your Maker render thanks that ye are so comfortably conditioned!" The story furnishes interesting details of social background: the saint travelling in company with his clerics, the custom of the monks of one monastery visiting those of another, the sports of the chase, the food of the people.

Another most striking use of venison will be found below in the story of the aid rendered Kyenán by Mochua. When Saint Kyenán had finished building his church, he sent a message to Saint Mochua to come to its consecration. When the holy man heard of the message, he took twenty deer that he found in the mountain named Mairg and, loading them with wood, proceeded to the church of Saint Kyenán. After the wood had been unloaded, Mochua ordered the deer to be killed and their flesh cooked to supply the people with food, their bones to be kept unharmed until the next day. When the hunger of the poor had been satisfied with the marvelous venison, Saint Mochua commanded the deer to arise in their own form. "Et statim ossa illa arida carnem et pellem induunt, ac spiritum viuificum assumunt, atque in pristini uigoris motum membra extendunt." The deer thus raised to life, after the consecration of the church, took Saint Mochua back and he dismissed them at his cell door.

⁹¹ *Silva Gad* 2.38f (from *Egerton*).

These twenty deer have been seen in the mountains by many even until now.⁹²

The milking of deer, though exceptional, is mentioned quite specifically in the *Tripartite Life*.⁹³ Patrick left at Áth-dá-laarg when he founded a church there, three brothers and their sister Cathnea, "She it is that used to milk the hinds". The stories of the miraculous use of deer as milch animals are much more numerous. In a number of the stories which follow, it will be perceived that the saints have no difficulty in calling or approaching deer when wishing to make use of them. An instance of this which illustrates only the trustfulness of the deer, quite possibly without exercise of miraculous power, tells how a stag approached Saint Cronán one day while in the forest, "Et uenit ceruus mitissime ad sanctum Cronanum et de sinu sancti ceruus poma commedit familiariter".⁹⁴ A deer came every day to the cell of Saint Cainnech to be milked, "et iterum sine timore paulatim rediebat"!⁹⁵ Likewise deer came to Saint Cuanna, and the old Codex says became, like the lions at the feet of Daniel, lambs and remained with him as long as he lived.⁹⁶ Every vesper-time God sent to Ruadán the Fair, a doe to be milked for his sustenance, after which she ran quickly and lightly to Colmán Ela and was milked by him "a little after dawn"! The legend says the distance between the two saints was very great.⁹⁷ A doe's milk cured a sick man through the prayers of Saint Ailbe.⁹⁸ Saint Coemgen was fostering the infant Foelan, son of Colmán, Tanist over part of north Leinster. "Et non habens sanctus Coemgenus unde nouum haberet lac infantulo nutriendo quia mulieres et vaccae longe erant a suo monasterio." He prayed God and a deer provided milk, and when the boy had grown up she no longer came.⁹⁹ When this same little boy

⁹² *Boll* 1 Jan. 47; *V S H* 2.188.

⁹³ *P.* 73.

⁹⁴ *V S H* 2.24.

⁹⁵ *V S H* 1.163.

⁹⁶ *C S* 936.

⁹⁷ *Boll* 3 April 382; *C S* 329; *B N nE* 2.317f; *V S H* 2.250.

⁹⁸ *V S H* 1.60f.

⁹⁹ *Boll* 1 Junii 312; *V S H* 1.250.

refused cold milk, Coemgen asked the wooden bowl to warm it.¹⁰⁰ Bishop Erc with whom Brendan read his psalms had no milch cow, "for he used not to get alms from any save a little from men under rule", that is, from monks or the regular clergy. Brendan asked milk of his foster-father one day. "God is able to do that, my son," said the Bishop. "Thereafter every day came the hind from Sliab Luachra with her fawn, and she was milked by him, and after her milking she used to go [back] alone to the mountains."¹⁰¹ Bairre of Cork was taken when a very little boy by the clerics to foster and teach. It "was in the time of summer". When the men reached a hill called Muincille, i. e. RosCoill, the small boy became "thirsty and cried, asking for a drink". "Go to that doe and bring from her a drink for the boy." With characteristic impulsiveness they decided a place marked by a miracle was the spot on which the boy's education should begin. The man who "sheared him", i. e., gave him the tonsure, had an eye for beauty, for he exclaimed, "Beautiful and fair is the crest on Loan!" "Thou hast spoken well," said the Elder, "for it shall be his name henceforth: Findbarr, i. e. Fair Crest."¹⁰² In the very fabulous life of MacCreiche, after he had fasted forty days and forty nights in his cell, a doe came of her own accord and dropped her milk in a stone bowl or hollow at the door-post of the hermitage,

"A bowl of stone he had
In the hermitage assuredly,
In it for the modest cheerful clerk
The doe would drop her milk,"¹⁰³

Numerous also are the miracles in which deer supply the lack of other draught animals not only for carts and chariots, but also for ploughing. Mochua in the story related above, used deer to haul wood. When Findián of Clonard abode with the "British Elders, one day the monks went into the wood to cut trees for the building of their church. They did not let Findián

¹⁰⁰ *V S H* 1.251.

¹⁰¹ *L S* 249.

¹⁰² *V S H* 1.67.

¹⁰³ Plummer: *Misc. Hag. Hib.* 53.

go with them because of the great honor in which they held im. After they had gone, came the sub-prior to Findián, "Why was it thou wentest not into the wood?" he inquired. "We should have gone long ago had we been told to do so; now, when it is said, we will go, provided the means are found for us." "There are two young stags there in the field, yoke them and go into the woods at once." Findián went "to the service at once", and "Two angels of the God of heaven met him, and constrained the stags". Findián's load was the first of the wood to reach the church. "Unknown, however, is the end of the sub-prior who reproached him."¹⁰⁴ When Ruadán was going to the city of Temoria, a leper met him praying. Ruadán gave him his two chariot horses; immediately two deer from the woods ran out and docilely put themselves into the harness and brought Ruadán to his home.¹⁰⁵ After Saint Mochua, sive Cuana, cured a leper, on his way home the foot of his chariot horse was broken. The saint called a deer, which with the other horse took him safely on his way.¹⁰⁶ Saint Déclán's chariot horse was jaded. He ordered his servant Dormanagh to harness a deer from the herd. The animal bore him a whole day with no sign of fatigue, and at the saint's command returned to the herd.¹⁰⁷ Saint Squieth, a virgin, sent to Ailbe for two oxen to plough for her. Ailbe blessed the mountain and two deer came from them. "Ite ad Squietham, et cum illa mites et domiti agros arate, et omnibus annis congruo arandi tempore ad eam redite." After many years of obedience, the deer came to Ailbe at Ymlachum Ymari, desiring that the yoke of servitude be lifted from their necks. Ailbe said: "Obedientiam vestram nolite deserere; sed ad Squietham iterum revertimini, et quanto tempore voluerit servite illi." The story concludes, "Tunc cervi illi obedientes reversi sunt ad Firt Squethe, nemine illos vidente in via".¹⁰⁸ Mochuda or Carthage's aversion for oxen has been referred to above.¹⁰⁹ Hence

¹⁰⁴ *L S* 223.

¹⁰⁵ *Boll* 2 April 382; *C S* 328; *V S H* 2.249.

¹⁰⁶ *Boll* 1 Jan. 47.

¹⁰⁷ *Boll* 5 Julii 604.

¹⁰⁸ *C S* 252.

¹⁰⁹ See p. 21f.

when a poor man asked the abbot for oxen to plough, Mochuda sent his servant to the adjoining wood to take two deer which should meet him to plough. After ploughing, the deer returned of themselves to the forest.¹¹⁰ Columcille went to Bishop Etchen of Meath to have episcopal orders conferred on him (Columcille). He found the cleric ploughing in the field. "Meseems", said Columcille, "it is not proper for us that a ploughman confer orders upon us". He asked Etchen for his ploughshare. "He gives it at once, and not less did the oxen plough!" "A good man is the cleric!" they said. Then Columcille asked for the outer ox. Etchen straightway bestowed it on them; and the good man "ordered a stag which was in the forest to do that work, and he does it forthwith".¹¹¹ King Keannfaelid (649) was building a palace. Attracta refused his request to obtain by her miracles treasures from other lands. All his subjects were ordered to bring a quota of wood. Saint Nathy and his companions and Attracta retired to the woods with their horses for this purpose. The horses were too weak to bear the burden. There were some deer rubbing their backs against the trees. At Saint Attracta's prayer, the deer came and put themselves in the yoke, and docilely went along the roads bearing the timber to the haughty king. The cords binding the wood broke, and there were no others available. Attracta took out hairs and secured the load with them! When "this dynast" saw the manner of bearing the wood, he incited the town dogs to worry the deer and tear them to pieces. Attracta prayed. The horses of the king and queen were seized with madness and killed the dogs, and all who had part in urging on the dogs were put to death. The deer returned to the forest after having suppliantly licked the hem of the saint's garment. The dogs were not killed, but turned to stone, and the Irish believe will remain so until judgment. The saint told the king that for his cruelty, he should be reduced to servitude, exiled from Connaught and strangers should seize his sustenance. His heirs should not have his possessions after death.¹¹² Deer guided by no mortal hand

¹¹⁰ *Boll* 3 Mai 380; *V S H* 1.179.

¹¹¹ *Fél* 73.

¹¹² *Boll* 2 Feb. 299f.

come to carry the body of the murdered Saint Cellach to the place the Lord designed for his burial. The deer remained to plough for the monks, and at evening after the day's work was done were wont to come to the tomb of Cellach, and lick the earth in that sacred place in token of affection.¹¹³

These deer served in ordinary fashion apparently, but in certain stories burdens are carried on their horns. Notable here is the great stag that patiently waited on the youthful Ciarán when he came to study at the great school of Clonard with Findián. When the boy would go out into the silence of the great woods to study, tradition says that a stag used to come and lie down in front of the monk, presenting its horns as a reading stand¹¹⁴ on which the youth was wont to place his book while he read. One day Ciarán heard the bell. He rose quickly at the sound; the stag rose more swiftly and went forth with the book on his horns. Though the day was wet and the night after it, and though the book was open, not a single letter in it was moistened! On the morrow the cleric rose, and the deer came to him with the book all safe. It was the same stag that went with Ciarán when his brethren, because of their envy of him, bade him depart. Ciarán put his books on the stag, and the animal "went before him to Inis Angin", and he entered that island and dwelt there.¹¹⁵ When Columcille forgot and left his books on a certain ridge, he had not gone far when a stag came towards him with the books on his back. The animal fell on his knees before Columcille and cast down the books before him. A well burst forth in the place.¹¹⁶ The deer that attended Saint Cainnech was a trifle more human. "Simili modo Sanctus Kannechus iterum a fratribus recedens, in vicina grunna haut longe a suo loco solus celative fuit; ibique ad eum cervus veniens librum sancti sedule legentis suis cornibus sustinebat. Alio autem die, timore illum cogente, sine abbatis sui consilio librum secum rapiens velociter perrexit, usquequo crastino die, post multos heremi circuitus, librum, licet apertum,

¹¹³ *Boll* 1 Mai 110f; *Silva Gad* 2.62 (*Lebar Brece*).

¹¹⁴ *L S* 268.

¹¹⁵ *L S* 274.

¹¹⁶ O'Donnell, *Manus: Betha Colaim Chille* 175.

sanum tamen et integrum, in suis cornibus reducens, quasi monachus fugitivus ad suum abbatem repente rediit.”¹¹⁷ Columbanus and his brother Furlaga were about to set out for their missionary labors. Saint Fintan called deer from the woods and placed upon them the books and worldly possessions of the two disciples. The saints were to proceed on their journey until “foxes issued from their caverns”, which they did, taking ship for England at the seashore where the foxes came forth.¹¹⁸

In several stories saints rescue deer while being hunted. “Quodam die, manens sanctus Moedhog in secreto loco, legensque ibi, lassus ceruus venit ad eum, sequentibus eum, canibus. Stetique ceruus ante sanctum Dei, quasi petisset defensionem. Sciensque uir Dei causam ipsius, possuit ceraculum suum, (i. e. the corner of his mantle) super cornua ipsius. Et uenientes canes post eum, apparuit eis ceruus quasi quoddam simulacrum. Non potentes canes iam eum inuenire ibi, nec inde uestigia eius sequi, reuersi sunt. Et sic ceruus, deponens ceraculum viri Dei de cornibus suis, liber euasit.”¹¹⁹ Likewise Nonnica, the little girl-saint from Wales, protected a stag pursued by the princely hunter Guerich. The animal ran into Nonnica’s church where the sisterhood were assembled in prayer. He lay down before the stall of the saint in the nuns’ choir, “ibique ante pedes ipsius mansuetus jacuit”. Guerich was surprised to see his quarry at the feet of the abbess. He granted the animal its freedom, and departed charmed and touched by the virgin’s gentleness.¹²⁰

The tenderness of the saints to deer and the response of the animal to that feeling may be well summarized in the eulogy of Saint Cainnech,¹²¹ “Cainnech of the piety loved to be in a rude forest wilderness; saving the wild deer only, none used to cherish him.” Of the three Cainnechs, it is not known to which this refers.

¹¹⁷ *CS* 382f; *VSH* 1.165.

¹¹⁸ *CS* 231; cf. *VSH* 1.79; 2.210 (fox); *LS* 120; *Silva Gad* 1.37.

¹¹⁹ *VSH* 2.143, 2.296.

¹²⁰ *Boll* 1 Junii 402.

¹²¹ *Silva Gad* 2.504 (Tr. of *Extracts* LL 348.8; LB 16 a b).

Two stories of somewhat special interest remain. The first of these is the touching and beautiful legend of Saint Patrick's compassionate treatment of a doe and her fawn. The great saint had obtained a grant of a hill in Ard-Macha from King Dáire. Patrick with his followers, accompanied by the king, climbed the hill that they might view "the admirable and pleasing gift". As they ascended the height, they found a doe and a little fawn lying on the very spot where the altar of the great northern church of Ard-Macha now stands. The saint's companions wished to catch the fawn and kill it, but Saint Patrick stayed them. Tenderly he took up the fawn and carried it on his shoulders, the doe following close at his heels, until he laid it down on another height at the north side of Armagh. Those learned in the topography of Armagh say that the hill on which the New Cathedral of Armagh is built is the identical spot to which, like the Good Shepherd of old, Saint Patrick carried the fawn, a touching image of that Church of Ireland that for centuries he has loved so tenderly, and borne so faithfully in his paternal arms.¹²²

The second story is the account of Saint Patrick's miraculous escape from Laeghaire's treachery, interesting in itself, and rendered notable by its legendary connection with his famous *Lorica*, the "Deer's Cry". Laeghaire (or Leary), High Priest of Ireland, had summoned Patrick to Tara after the saint had insulted the Druids by lighting the Paschal fire. The king treated the missionaries with scant courtesy and dismissed them. Almost immediately he summoned the saint again, seemingly, in order that he might explain to the nobles of the king's court the Christian doctrine. The invitation, however, was simply a ruse that Leary might entrap the apostle and his followers. The king placed ambuscades for the trapping of the Christians, "But", continues Jocelyn,¹²³ "on the morrow, Patrick with eight persons only and the boy Benignus going in a straight road to Teomaria where the king then resided, passed through them who had laid snares for his life; and their eyes were bound, they

¹²² *Trip* 231, 292 App *Muirchu's Notes*.

¹²³ P. 61f.

could not behold them; and to their sight appeared eight stags with one hind passing over the mountains, and thus, the Lord being his protector, did the saint and his companions escape the contrivers of his destruction".¹²⁴ Tradition has it that as the saint passed between the ranks of the pagans, he chanted the famous hymn since known as the *Lorica*, or "Deer's Cry", preserved in the *Book of Hymns* of the 11th century.¹²⁵ A translation of this charm by Whitley Stokes may be found in the *Tripartite Life* from Rawlinson, B 512.¹²⁶

3. Wild Swine

In contrast with domesticated swine, references to wild swine are comparatively few. This might seem natural were it not that the wild boar plays so notable a part in the myths of all Celtic countries that one might expect to find it reflected to a more marked degree in the *Lives*. There is abundant evidence of boar-worship in Celtic countries, myths of supernatural beasts like that Finn slew or the Twrch Trwth of Arthurian legend or that which killed Diarmuid, causing pigs to be tabu to all his progeny,¹²⁷ and then myths pass down into the heroic literature and the folk-tales of the shannacies of our day. Places commemorate famous animals, mythical or actual, such as "The Road of the Black Pig", starting in Athlone and traceable as far as Carlen mountain in Sligo, while in the "Valley of the Black Pig", a tumulus, the "Grave of the Black Pig", commemorates his death and burial.

Wild pigs, prolific and well equipped to care for themselves, once existed in numbers in Ireland and Britain, and did not

¹²⁴ Also *Trip* 47f, 459 App *Lebar Brecc* . . . "behind them a fawn with a white bird on its shoulder, that is Bénen with Patrick's writing tablets on his back".

¹²⁵ Cf. the life of Benignus *Boll* 4 Nov. 155.

¹²⁶ P. 49f; cf. also the tr. by Kuno-Meyer, *Ancient Irish Poetry* 25f; James Clarence Mangan, *Poems and a Study*, ed. Louise Imogene Guiney, 123; George Sigerson, *Bards of the Gael and Gall* 138; the original Irish published by George Petrie *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* xviii (1837) printed from *Liber Hymnorum*.

¹²⁷ Macculloch, J. A.: *Mythology of All Races* 3.124ff (especially pp. 124-127-172); Plotis 3 xxiv; Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths* 2.131-135; *RC* 33.173f (from *Lebor na Feinne* (Campbell), tr. by J. H. Lloyd, O. J. Bergin and G. Schoepperle).

disappear till toward the 15th century. Giraldus says, "Apro-
rum quidem et silvestrium porcorum nusquam terrarum tantam
copiam vidimus. Sunt tamen exigui, deformes, et fugitivi: nec
minus audacia et animositate, quam corporis compositione de-
generes."¹²⁸ References to wild swine in general are not very
common. A number of them have been included in the section
on domesticated swine to show how closely Patrick is associated
with pigs. It is the wild boar that holds the center of the stage,
and with other than saints constrains reverential dread and ad-
miration. It must be remembered that the wild boar is totally
different in looks and character from the obese, inert, domestic
pig as we ordinarily know him. He was powerful, swift, cour-
ageous, and while not a constant menace like the wolf, he was
ferocious when attacked. The animal offers exciting sport at
fair odds to hunters today, where preserved in Europe and in
Asia. The former activity and spirit of his ancestry may even
in some measure reappear in domesticated animals which have
reverted to a wild state.

It is fortunate that we have several references to wild swine,
or in particular to wild boars, other than that of Ciarán's first
disciple in the famous apologue to be treated below.¹²⁹ Saint Ita
gave her foster-child a bell which would be silent until Mochoe-
mog came to the place of his abode. In the 'stead' where the
bell spoke, a ferocious boar came to the saint, growing tame as
it stood before him. The spot was later named Liath, the Irish
for 'boar'.¹³⁰

Another wild boar beside Ciarán's became a convert in the
Vita of that remarkable saint Ruadán the Fair who was twelve
feet high, "perfect in form he was comely both within and
without, but most comely within". In a hollow of a tree near
Lothra in Ormond County where Ruadán afterwards built his
monastery, the saint came upon a fear-inspiring boar. When
he saw the saint, he quitted the place in which he was and be-
came "as a monk of obedience to the Lord and to Ruadán".

¹²⁸ *Works*, ed. Dimock, 5.57.

¹²⁹ See p. 240f.

¹³⁰ *Boll* 2 Mar. 279; *V S H* 2.170.

Of his perseverance in grace the legend says no more.¹³¹ Brendan bade Saint Finán proceed to found his monastery at the mountain Smoir where he would meet with a "gregem aproprum".¹³² Saint Brigit rendered tame a fierce boar coming out of the woods bent on destruction. "Alio vero tempore cum aperferus, singularis et silvestris et fugitivus esset, ad gregem porcorum B. Brigidae mansuetissime pervenit. Quem ipsa inter suas sues cernens, benedixit ac deinde impavidus ac familiaris permansit in grege porcorum ejus: quia et bruta animalia et bestiae sermonibus et voluntati ejus resistere non poterant; sed domita et subjecta placida sibi servitute ut voluit famulabantur."¹³³ Boars, like deer, may seek protection from the hunters under the saints' care. Brandubh, son of Eatach, came hunting a wild board into the valley where Coemgen dwelt. There was the holy man under the trees praying, the birds on his hands and shoulders and flying about him "carmina suaui sancto Dei canentes". The boar sought refuge with Coemgen, entering his oratory. The dogs did not enter, but crouched down before him. The hunter seeing these wonders, withdrew his dogs from the spot.¹³⁴ In the *Irish Life*,¹³⁵ when the boar seeks the protection of the saint, the dogs are bound, and released only after the boar had been given to Coemgen's protection.¹³⁶ Yet Columcille slew a wild boar by his prayer. When he was staying in the island of Skye alone in order to pray, he entered a thick wood and met a boar of wondrous size pursued by the hounds. "Calling on the Name of God and raising his holy hand with earnest prayer, he said to him: 'Think not to come further this way; in the place to which thou hast now come, die!'" And "the terrible beast" was struck dead "by the power of his word".¹³⁷

¹³¹ *Boll* 2 April 379; *V S H* 2.241; *B N nE* 2.308.

¹³² *V S H* 2.88f.

¹³³ *Boll* 1 Feb. 133, 137.

¹³⁴ *V S H* 1.244.

¹³⁵ *B N nE* 2.124, 149.

¹³⁶ For Saints protecting other animals, cf. (deer) *V S H* 1.168; (wolf) 1.62; 2.296; (fox) *LS* 266.

¹³⁷ Adamn 78; O'Donnell, *Manus: Betha Colaim Chille* 325f.

The wild boar figures in the dramatic story of Patrick's freedom from the slavery of his druid-master. The saint's Angel, Victor one day appeared to the youth and "The trace of his (the angel Victor's) feet remains still on the stone. And Victor said to him, 'It is time for thee,' saith he, 'to go over sea to learn; for it is for thee that God hath determined that thou shalt be teacher of the folk of this island.' 'I will not go,' saith Patrick, as if he would say ('I will not go till I obtain consent from my master'). 'Go,' saith the angel, 'and ask him.' So Patrick went and asked him, but he obtained not consent unless he should give him (the master) a mass of gold equal to his head. Patrick said to him, "'By my God's doom, God is able [to do] that if it is pleasing to Him.' That was a kind of oath that Patrick had, as if he would say 'by my God of doom!' Patrick went back to his swine in the wilderness and related to Victor all his master's words. Said the angel to him, 'follow yonder boar, and he will dig out of the earth a mass of gold, and take it with thee to thy Lord.' And so it was done."¹³⁸

4. *Foxes*

In the *Lives* the fox is not presented as the keen-witted and malicious trickster delighting to involve others by his cunning in situations which bring them shame and bodily harm, getting himself involved in almost hopeless dangers from which he generally can extricate himself by some tour de force of cleverness—the character which appears in widely sundered fields of folklore, and of literature derived from it. In the *Lives* he appears as an animal capable of a lively affection and devoted service to the saints who admit him to companionship, but one in whom the natural inclination to mischief at last asserts itself in some sudden falling from grace.

The explanation for this is to be found in the apparently quite common practice of making pets of foxes. There is abundant evidence in modern times to prove what engaging pets young foxes can be, affectionate and intelligent, and also how their innate wildness can assert itself in sudden acts of apparently

¹³⁸ R C 6.264 (from *Liber Hymnorum*, orig. and trans. by Whitley Stokes).

wanton mischief. This practice of keeping foxes as pets is alluded to in secular literature, and in the *Brehon Laws*¹³⁹ there is mention of a 'smacht' or fine for pet foxes along with pet wolves and other pets. But an illustration also actually appears in the *Lives*. One day a churl of Brigit's household, while cutting firewood, killed a pet fox belonging to the King of Leinster. The irate monarch seized the churl. Then Brigit ordered a wild fox to come out of the wood, "so he came and was at his feats playing for them and for the King by Brigit's orders". Then, "when he had done his deeds, he went safe through the wood, with the host of Leinster, both foot and horse and hounds, pursuing him".¹⁴⁰ In the *Bollandist* version,¹⁴¹ Saint Brigit goes to the aid of her churl in her chariot, the fox which she has just called from the woods seated beside her—"mansuete in curru cum ea sedit". The king and his horse pursued the fox, but "at vespertime" returned empty-handed.¹⁴²

Far and away the most notable story of dutiful foxes which fall from grace is in the wholly delightful legend of Saint Ciarán of Saighir's woodland monastery. This is reserved for special comment at the close of this paper.¹⁴³

There are three other stories on this theme. One of them is told of the other Ciarán of Clonmacnois, the carpenter's son.¹⁴⁴ As a herd-boy, the little fellow carried to his herding his hunger for knowledge. A fox of the woods made itself his servant. It used to carry, back and forth, between tutor and pupil, the Psalter wherein Ciarán was reading. The wise animal would sit hard by and listen to the boy reading his lesson till he had turned the last page; then he would watch Ciarán with his style copy the lesson upon waxen tablets. Forthwith Reynard, taking the tablets in his mouth, would carry them with the Psalter home to Justus, and bring them back again, corrected and approved. One day the flesh got the better of him. Tempted by

¹³⁹ 4.115.

¹⁴⁰ *L S* 196f.

¹⁴¹ 1 Feb. 134.

¹⁴² *C S* 46-49.

¹⁴³ See p. 240.

¹⁴⁴ *L S* 265f.

the tastiness of the wax, he gave way to gluttony. Going aside from the beaten path, the animal prepared to enjoy the lesson under a bush. Aongus, son of Crimthan, came upon him with his hounds and men just at the critical moment, and Ciarán's lesson was saved, "and he found no shelter in any place till he came under Ciarán's cowl. . . . And that book is today called *Pólaire Ciarán* ('Ciarán's Tablets')."'

Two other erring foxes are found in the Life of Saint Moling.¹⁴⁵ The saint took pleasure in feeding animals both wild and domestic. Among the wild animals was a fox. This fox stole a hen belonging to the brothers and ate her. "Querimoniam inde agentes fratres, increpauit vir Dei vulpem, et accusauit perfidiam eius pre ceteris animalibus. Vulpis autem videns et respiciens dominum suum sibi iratum, abiit ad cellam sanctimonialium sub cura sancti Molyng viuencium, et inde callide gallinam rapuit, et duxit eam ad sanctum Molyng, obtulitque eam viuam et sanam illi. Et subridens sanctus ait illi: 'Rapi nam obtulisti pro furto. Hanc gallinam ad dominas suas reporta, et assigna eam eis incolumem; et postea viue sine furto, sicut cetera animalia'." And the fox hearing this, took the hen between his teeth and deposited her safe in the convent of the sisters. Another time a second fox took the book of the brothers and hid it in one of his caves, wishing to eat it. "Et reuertens ad monasterium inuentus est rapiens et comedens fauum mellis." Then the brothers led him before Saint Moling, accusing him of the theft. "Iussitque sanctus senior fratribus ut dimitterent illum liberum. Cumque esset absolutus, ait ei sanctus: 'O dolose et callide, uade, et affer cicius librum integrum ad me.'" The fox went out and returned quickly, placing the book at the feet of the holy man. "Et postea iacuit super terram coram viro Dei, quasi petens indulgentiam." The saint said to him, "'Surge, miser, nichil timens; set ne vnquam vltra librum moueas.' Tunc vulpis gaudens surrexit, et mirabiliter mandata sancti compleuit; non solum enim postea libros non tetigit, set si quis pro ludo librum ei monstraret, in fugam ibat ab eo".¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *VSH* 2.201; *RC* 27.302 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

¹⁴⁶ *VSH* 2.201.

The life of Saint Moling specializes in foxes. There is, beside the two just told, a most charming tale how the foxes came to pay him honor. When Moling was in his city of Ferns, a crowd of foxes collected about him in the woods and came into the city where they knew Saint Moling was. No dog or man harmed the animals either coming to or going from Moling, the dogs seeming to be under divine constraint. Moling knew beforehand prophetically their coming and said: "*Hospites ignoti ad nos cito uenient, qui nunquam usque hodie inter homines habitauerunt; necque longo tempore cum eis habitabunt.*" When the foxes came, Moling ordered hospitality to be given them of the best. The man of God went to meet them on the way, and seeing him "*vulpes singuli ad pedes eius venerunt leti, et sanctus pontifex accepit eos piissime*". That night they remained and were well entertained. The next day the foxes returning, now joyful, now sad, Moling said to them, "*Hanc ciuitatem post modicum tempus relinquam, et ad locum meum reuertar*". At this word the foxes seemed sadder still. After receiving the holy man's blessing, the animals returned to their place. Hearing what he had said to the foxes, men felt that he spoke of the brevity of his life. "*Et de ipsis verbis homines cum animalibus tristes effecti sunt.*"¹⁴⁷

According to the prophecy of Saint Fintan neither beast nor bird touched the body of a holy old man that had lain unburied for six days, though "*vulpis esuriens summitatem aurium et narium eius gustabit*".¹⁴⁸

Three stories present the fox in his unregenerate state—two of the natural beast in his own character, one a symbolic use. A fox stole a "*corrigeam calciamenti*" from Columba of Tir-daglass on the island of Erc, and proceeded to eat it.¹⁴⁹ The thief was immediately struck dead, but more than this, from that day, if a fox enter the island from without he dies "*aut statim quasi canes fugiens, territus ab insula nattat*". Perhaps, one might add the story of how foxes in a solitary place laid hold

¹⁴⁷ *V S H* 2.202.

¹⁴⁸ *V S H* 2.99f.

¹⁴⁹ *C S* 456.

of Saint Eoghan with their teeth, but on account of his merits, they were not strong enough to bite even the thong of his shoe, which was found safe in their teeth.¹⁵⁰ The *Life of Saint Patrick*¹⁵¹ has the story of the tyrant king Cereticus in Britain at Vallia who had treated Saint Patrick with insolence, laughing to scorn the warnings of the saint. Patrick prayed thus, "O Lord, as Thou knowest this vulpine man to be monstrous in vice, do thou in a monstrous mode cast him forth from the face of the earth and appoint an end unto his offence!" While the tyrant stood in the midst of his court with his people, he was suddenly transformed into a fox and, flying from their sight, never more was seen on earth.

5. *Badgers*

Badgers were hunted for sport, and for their flesh and fur. References in secular literature attest the use of their flesh for food. Cormac, son of Tadg, desired some badgers for a feast, and to obtain them violated a covenant his father had made with certain very human badgers, promising them on his sword that no harm should come. The promise was broken, the animals slain, and he was known thereafter as Cormac of the Dishonored Spear.¹⁵² Deirdre, it may be remembered, recalls food brought in Scotland by Naise and his brother, fish, venison and the flesh of badgers.

One notable appearance the badger has in the *Lives*—as a most important member of Ciarán's monastic family, where the part he plays renders him worthy to be placed beside the Badger in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*. This tale is reserved for the concluding section of this paper.¹⁵³ The only other connection of badgers with saints apparently is with Saint Molaise of Devenish, who in that strange piece, *Baile Bricini*,¹⁵⁴ that enumerates the saints of Ireland by kennings, is nicknamed "the sweet-choired, badger-faced one of Lough Erne". This

¹⁵⁰ *CS* 917f.

¹⁵¹ Jocelyn 201f.

¹⁵² *Three Glossaries*, xliiff cited by Plummer, *VSH* 1.cxlv.

¹⁵³ See p. 241.

¹⁵⁴ *Harl.* 5280f 46° (also *Egerton*) cited by Plummer *VSH* 1.cxlvi.

name is explained as due to the hood or cowl of badger-skins he wore. But what is exceedingly strange is that when he journeyed down to hell to rescue the soul of Manann the Jester, he held in his hand a little strip of badger-skin. As regards Manann, "God granted him out of hell, and thrice fifty of his namesake together with him".¹⁵⁵

6. Otters

The "water dog", *dobor chú*, plays a minor but by no means ineffectual rôle in the *Lives*. The sport he afforded the hunter as today is not touched upon and only once the value placed upon his skin.

Primarily his part seems to be to provide the saints with fish. In the life of Coemgen, an otter supplies the saint regularly with fish. He is treated with base ingratitude, however, by a monk of the saint's company. Coemgen was in Cell Iffin during Lent, and the otter used to bring a salmon every day to supply him and his company. It occurred to the monk Cellach that he could make a fine glove of his skin. "The otter, though a mere brute beast, understood his thought and from that time ceased to perform his service to the monks."¹⁵⁶ The Hermit Paul had been nourished in the monastery of Saint Patrick until he was bidden by a stranger to go to the seaside where he would find a vessel which would bring him to the spot appointed for his resurrection. In time the ship approached a rocky island. Paul landed, and on the ninth day an otter came bearing in its forepaws a fish with some grass and twigs. Paul struck fire from the flint, lighted the grass and twigs and prepared a meal. "Every day my servant came in like manner from the sea, and thus I lived thirty years."¹⁵⁷

They may be obliging in other ways. An otter dived for Coemgen's book which he had dropped into the lake. One day when the saint was reciting his hours he dropped his psalter into the lake. "Afterwards an otter came to Coemgen bringing the psalter with him from the bottom of the lake, and not a line or

¹⁵⁵ *Silva Gad* 2.22 (*Additional*); *V S H* 1.cxliv.

¹⁵⁶ *B N nE* 2.125.

¹⁵⁷ *V S H* 1.131; 2.289.

letter was blotted (lit. 'drowned')."¹⁵⁸ Quite unusual is the kindness otters rendered Saint Cuthbert. While praying on the seashore and quite lost in his devotions, two otters came out of the sea to the saint and kept his feet warm with their breath. They had all they could do to wipe them dry with their fur. Their friendly ministrations no longer needed, they returned to the sea.¹⁵⁹

In the strange story of the girl Lúbán who was changed into a salmon, her lap-dog was changed into an otter. This story will be told more fully below.¹⁶⁰ Less curious, but curious enough, is the legend of Brendan and of Dobarchú who through Brendan's vengeance was changed into an otter. Brendan took shelter in Thomond and his neighbor was a man named Dobarchú ('water-dog', otter) from whom descended the Úi Dobarchon in Thomond. The man had a grass meadow close to Loch Lir. Brendan's oxen entered the field and Dobarchú killed them. "If it be God's will," Brendan said, "let Dobarchú be turned into an otter." A year passed and Dobarchú and his wife went to visit the meadow and the man began to angle for a salmon that leapt in front of them. He caught a trout, made a fire of bracken, roasted the trout and ate it off the spit. Going to the lake for a drink, he fell into the water, "and was turned into an otter (swimming) up and down the lake through the word of Brendan." When Cúcúan, Dobarchú's son, came to the meadow and would have angled for the salmon, the otter came to warn him "not to take fish from the lake, not to make a fire of bracken, and on no account to eat salmon off the spit".¹⁶¹ There is a sequel to the story, telling of the repentance of Brendan for his hotheadedness and his subsequent penance with Saint Gildas.¹⁶²

Nowhere in the *Lives* is there trace of "the master-otter" which according to the peasantry haunts the lakes of the west of Ireland, and which should be sought diligently, as his skin,

¹⁵⁸ *B N nE* 2.123.

¹⁵⁹ *Capg* 1.221.

¹⁶⁰ See p. 196f.

¹⁶¹ *B N nE* 2.79.

¹⁶² *V S H* 1.140f; *B N nE* 2.80f. Also cf. p. 123f, *supra*.

even a small portion, is a preservative against fire, protects ships from being cast away, and will prevent steel and bullet from harming a man who carries even an inch of the precious material about him. The master-otter himself has certain preservative qualities, for he cannot be harmed by mortal hands.¹⁶³

7. Seals

The natural interest awakened when one sees seals swimming and playing in the water or basking on the rocks is not the reason why several stories concerning them appear in the *Lives*. It is a pity that we have no instance of some saint or hermit on the coast or an island making friends with some one of these, as we now know, highly intelligent creatures, for there was, as we shall see, opportunity.

In two stories, seals, like otters, befriend the saints. In one, a seal brings back Saint Cuthbert's book which had dropped into the water.¹⁶⁴ In another, a seal was kinder than the fishermen on the banks of the Muad who refused a gift of fish to Saint Mochua of Balla. "If", said the saint, "there were a servant of God below, he would bring us somewhat." Whereupon a seal cast on the shore four salmon for the saint and his companions.¹⁶⁵

Of greater interest are two stories that show that seals had an economic value, and not, as one might suppose, merely because of their skins or oil. We find that the monastic family of Columcille owned an island with a colony of seals upon it and had no intention of permitting poaching upon their preserve. One day the saint called to him two of the brothers, Lugbe and Silnan, and told them: "Now pass over to the Malean island (Mull) and in the fields near the sea seek out Erc, a robber, who last night came alone and secretly from the island of Colonsay, and through the day tried to hide himself under his coracle covered with hay, among the sand-hills, that by night he may sail over to the little island where the sea-calves (seals), that are ours by right, are bred and breed, that the greedy and most thievish

¹⁶³ Wood-Martin: *Elder Faiths* 2.121f.

¹⁶⁴ *Cappg* 1.217.

¹⁶⁵ *Boll* 1 Jan. 49; *LS* 287.

fellow may fill his coracle with them when savagely slain, and then make his way back to his home". The monks obediently went, and found the thief and brought him back to the saint. Columcille chided the robber for his thievery, and ordered a sheep to be killed and given to him in place of the seals, "lest he should return empty to his home". Further, after some time, Columcille seeing the death of the thief to be imminent, sent him "a fat sheep and six pecks of corn" as his last gifts. These were used for the man's funeral feast.¹⁶⁶

One very important reason why the seals were valued was the use of their flesh as food. This appears by implication in the story above, and is clearly proved by a romantic tale told of a fisherman of Saint Brigit. Noble and pious guests came to Brigit, even "the seven bishops who are on the hill in the east of Leinster". Brigit ordered a certain man from her household to go to the sea and catch fish for the entertainment of her guests. The man went, taking his harpoon. A seal chanced to come by and he thrust his seal-spear into it. The string of the spear was tied to his hand and the seal dragged the man over the sea to Britain, there leaving him after breaking the string. British fishermen, "when he had told his tales to them", gave him a boat. He crossed over, found his seal on the shore of the sea of Leinster and took it home for Brigit's guests.¹⁶⁷ Evidently the flesh of the seal was quite fit to be offered to the noble guests of Saint Brigit.

Seal-skin finds at least one mention in the *Lives* when Saint Patrick gave to a disciple a seal-skin on which he used to stand while celebrating Holy Mass to be made into a pólaire or book-satchel in which to carry the students' books.¹⁶⁸

The fifty ocean seals of which Brendan made "fifty excellent horses" as tribute to Aed Guaire, King of Connaught, belong rather to fabulous animals and are found in that section.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Adamn 41f; O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 243.

¹⁶⁷ *Boll* 1 Feb 129; *L S* 196.

¹⁶⁸ *Trip* 75; Jocelyn, 131. See also p. 36.

¹⁶⁹ See p. 219.

8. Whales

Whales find admission to the *Lives* under circumstances that leave one in doubt whether they are ordinary whales or fabulous monsters, though they must have been a familiar sight along the coast, and stranded, and one might have expected that adventures with them might have diversified the frequent voyages which the saints made. No doubt fabulous monsters were much better for this purpose. The only story in which what seems to have been an ordinary whale appears is one told by Baithéné, the nephew of Columcille who had followed the great abbot into exile, and who became in time Iona's second abbot. He was sailing one day on an errand of mercy, when a whale swam close to the boat. Forewarned by Columcille, from his frail coracle of wicker and skins, the youth exclaimed: "We are both in God's Hands, this monster and I", and he blessed the water, whereat the monster disappeared, and the boat pursued its way in peace.¹⁷⁰

All other "whales" appear in the voyage of Brendan and all have characteristics that mark them as fabulous or imaginatively enlarged. One, to be sure, blows water from his nostrils, but his general appearance and behavior marks him as plainly fabulous. The great "whale", Jasconius, is like Jonah's whale in that he is not a whale but wears the name for convenience of reference only. For these creatures, see the chapter on fabulous animals below.

9. Birds

References to birds, by name and unnamed, are many—a fact which is significant if one considers that they are due to natural interest and affection which birds inspire, and are not incidental to practical needs of man which birds may subserve. The use of birds for food is found in secular literature in the *Colloquy*, for instance where "Birds out of the trackless oaken woods would find their way to the Fianna's cooking-pot . . . and variegated nests from mountain pinnacles", the nests being used apparently to aid in lighting fires.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Adamn 25.

¹⁷¹ *Silva Gad* 2.119 (from the *Book of Lismore*).

In the *Lives*, the use of birds as food is spoken of but twice, and the scene is not in Ireland. The appearance of a flock of birds, which made no attempt to fly away saved Columbanus and his followers for three days from starvation.¹⁷² So also, the brethren of Saint Gall were saved from hunger, in this case by a single strange bird, for, as the story says, even after his death Saint Gall, from on high, looked after the interests of his brothers. One time a certain prior named Stephen seated in his cell was about to send for the brothers to tell them of the monastery's dire poverty, there being no flesh for them to eat. Before he had told them, however, an unknown bird perched itself on the doorway. One of the brothers seized a brand from the fire, and pierced its wing. When the flesh of this bird was prepared for the brothers' use, it was found to have a very sweet flavor. As God had prepared food for His Chosen People in the desert, so Gall had sent his family the unknown bird from Heaven with its sweetness delighting them.¹⁷³

The gathering of eggs of wild birds like the plover, still practised today, is not spoken of in the *Lives*, but there is a most interesting reference to it in Giraldus, recorded below.¹⁷⁴ No instance appears, as in secular literature, of the use of feathers or skins for practical purposes or decoration, unless the following may be so considered. Saint Molasius chancing to meet on the way a 'synod' of clergy and desiring to copy their itinerary, at a loss for a pen, lifted his hand to birds hovering overhead, whereupon one, with charming courtesy, dropped him a quill. "The bird bestowed his quill."¹⁷⁵

A passing reference may be made here to the interesting comments of Giraldus on the birds of Ireland—much more to the purpose than the "avis rara" he seems to repeat from Solinus who wrote 900 years before him. He notes the presence in Ireland of many different birds, swans abounding in the northern part, storks rarely, and in color black, harboring about beds

¹⁷² Migne, P. L. 87; Jonas, "Life of Columbanus," *Translations and Reprints* 2 No. 7 32; *Capg* 1.214.

¹⁷³ Migne, P. L. 114; Walahfrid Strabo *Life of Saint Gall* 1009.

¹⁷⁴ See p. 243; cf. p. 98 n443.

¹⁷⁵ *V S H* 2.135.

of streams in winter and with the spring "betaking themselves to a free current of air", hawks, falcons, sparrow-hawks that nestle close to bats to keep warm in winter; eagles as numerous as kites in other countries; flocks of cranes, often a hundred assembled in one flock; and great flocks of white geese with "prodigious cackling"; wild peacocks, possibly the "cock of the woods" of the pine forests of Norway; wild hens, commonly called 'grutes', small and scarce, in shape and color like a partridge; immense flights of large snipes, 'acetæ' in Latin, the old English 'snite', the old form of snipe or rude-coce, probably the wood-cock (wude-coce), and smaller snipe ordinarily found in marshes. He notes quails in great numbers and "clouds of larks singing praises to God", and the absence of falcons save those of noble breed, of partridges, pheasants, and nightingales. Ospreys are mentioned, and martinets which, when dead, never decay but are preserved in dry places. They in turn preserve cloth from moths when hung up, and they change their plumage every year as though the vital spark still remained. He also mentions birds bred from barnacles, not considered flesh because not born of flesh—the well-known myth of the barnacle-geese that appears in the *Old English Riddles*, which is still current and often discussed even today.¹⁷⁶

The birds called by name in the *Lives* are the blackbird, wren, lark, duck, swan, cuckoo, crane, raven, partridge, kite, hawk, sparrow, eagle and stork.

Those stories in which the birds concerned are not named have this special value that several of them illustrate directly and significantly the love felt for birds and the poetic ideas associated with them, in particular the old and beautiful motive of the flight of the soul like a bird toward Heaven.¹⁷⁷ A natural kinship of sympathy and understanding, removing the possibility of fear, unites the birds and the truly saintly. Thus Columba of Terryglass when asked why the birds did not fear him, replied that his thoughts ceased not to fly, like a bird, towards the sky. "Sicut enim avis volat, sic mens mea semper ad celum

¹⁷⁶ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, pp. 26 to 43.

¹⁷⁷ The symbolic use of the bird-form for celestial creatures is taken up under "Supernatural Animals" below.

volare non cessat.”¹⁷⁸ When Colum MacCrimthann, a youth, was studying at Clonard under Findián, the master one day sent his pupil to find out what the folk of his school were doing. “Different, in sooth, was that at which each of them was found, yet all were good. Colomb, son of Crimthann, was found with his hands stretched forth, and his mind contemplative on God, and birds resting on his hands and on his head. When that was told to Findián he said: ‘The hands of that man shall give me communion and sacrifice at the ending days’.”¹⁷⁹ Again this close sympathy appears in the life of Saint Coemgen, lover of solitary prayer. Brandubh the king came to Glendalough to hunt. The dogs penetrated to Saint Coemgen’s cell; the king following, beheld the saint at prayer with flocks of birds circling around his head: “. . . et erat ibi sub arbore S. Coemgenus orans, et aves plures super manus ejus et humeros stabant, et volabant circa eum, carmina suavia Sancto Dei canentes. . . . Et rami et folia arborum aliquando dulcia carmina S. Coemgeno canebant, ut intolerabilem laborem ejus coelestia carmina temperarent”.¹⁸⁰ It is a bird that centers attention in the mourning that attended the death of Saint Molua, of whom it could be said, because of his saintliness: “Blithe will he be after arriving in heaven, great is my confidence in him, the holy champion, Molua MacOcha”.¹⁸¹ It was further said of him: “Molua never killed a bird or any other living thing”.¹⁸² It was Mael-an-faid that saw a little bird wailing and lamenting, and wondered, “O my God, what has happened yonder! I will not partake of food till it is revealed to me”. As he looked, an angel appeared to him and said, “That is well, O cleric, let this grieve thee no longer. Molua MacOcha has died, and therefore all living creatures bewail him, for never has he killed any animal, little or big; so not more do men bewail him than the other animals, and the little bird thou beholdest”.¹⁸³ It is a bird,

¹⁷⁸ *CS* 453f.

¹⁷⁹ *LS* 226.

¹⁸⁰ *Boll* 1 Junii 309.

¹⁸¹ *Fél* 2 174.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* 183.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* 57; cf. in contrast, the hushed apprehension and anticipation with which the birds and all creatures of the forest awaited the death of Saint Cellach, see p. 180.

also, that is the occasion of the lesson taught Saint Colmán that it is not so much through book-learning (all the more if it causes pride) that understanding is to be gained, as through the simplicity of mystic union with God. Saint Mochua in his rustic habit was at work beyond his dwelling and was carrying on his shoulders brush, on the top of which a small bird was perched, singing. There Colmán found him, and Mochua asked if he knew what the bird was singing. Colmán replied he did not. "I wonder at thee, for I, who know naught of writing, I know what he is singing. He says thou hast no wisdom in thy mind." "I acknowledge that I know nothing", said Colmán. "The unclean spirit go out from thee," exclaimed Mochua, whereupon the prince of darkness left Colmán who had so humbly acknowledged his pride.¹⁸⁴

In three other stories birds are mentioned, but not identified. One is amusing as an early example of the still current metaphor which likens scrawled handwriting to bird-tracks or fly-tracks. There was a little boy so very stupid that "*nemo potuit eum docere*", and his handwriting was so bad that it was as if "*vngula auis illud depinxerat*". But when Saint Comgall had blessed his eyes and hands he could write excellently well, "*et in ipsa arte auctor et doctor in vita sua fuit*".¹⁸⁵

Another tells how Saint Cainnech was once staying on the "Island of Birds" as a guest on Sunday, and the birds waxed so loquacious that they "offended the holy one". The saint rebuked their garrulity, and they, striking their breasts in compunction, all remained silent till the hour for second Matins, when the saint gave them power to speak.¹⁸⁶ It would be rather a pity to suppose that, by a mild clerical witticism, the 'birds' here meant the monks as dwelling in the "Island of Birds". Such an interpretation is, of course, at least possible.

The third story is a curious one, in which Columba of Iona is represented as delivering a judgment apparently so cruel as to seem less Christian austerity than the ruthless righteousness sometimes visited upon offenders in the Old Testament. A cer-

¹⁸⁴ *V S H* 2.185.

¹⁸⁵ *V S H* 2.13.

¹⁸⁶ *V S H* 1.161; *C S* 376.

tain layman named Tulchanus desiring to please God came from Ireland to the island of Hy to holy Columcille in order to become a monk. The man brought his son with him. Seeing that all the father's care was for his son, Baithén said to Columcille, "Frater Tulchanus plus amat filium suum quam Deum; ideo melius est illos separari". Then Columcille and all the brothers commanded Tulchanus to cast the little boy from a high rock into the sea. The monk carried out the obedience "gratias Deo agens cum magno dolore cordis; in maris profundum iecit filium suum". Then there descended two white sea-birds, and swam over the sea to the boy. Saint Cainnech on his way to Ireland say the boy coming over the waves between the two birds, and took him into his ship, proceeding to the island of Hy to Columcille. "Et vix potuit placari mens sancti Kainnici". After a time, however, the two saints gave each other the kiss of peace and cemented fraternity forever, after which Cainnech sailed to Hibernia.¹⁸⁷

In passing to the birds identified by name, a beautiful legend of Saint Coemgen, lover of solitude, may perhaps take precedence. One time in Lent—"Jesus' Lent in springtime", no doubt, not "Moses' Lent in summer", for the Irish had three Lents, the Advent season, and the forty days after Whitsuntide, beside the 'great Lent',¹⁸⁸ Coemgen went into a wattled hut built on a bare stone rock-ledge, and there for six weeks stood cross-vigil with arms outstretched to do honor to his Lord in commemoration of His Passion. A blackbird perched on one of the saint's hands and there built her nest, the saint suffering her till she had hatched and reared her young.¹⁸⁹ Giraldus¹⁹⁰ knew the story. "Sanctus igitur Keivinus, quadragesimali quo-

¹⁸⁷ *V S H* 1.159f.

¹⁸⁸ *Calendar of Oengus* 43; *Ériu* 7.117 "An Irish Penitential" (from *3 B 23*, tr. by E. J. Gwynn).

¹⁸⁹ *B N nE* 2.123f; *LS* 344 n, cites from Dr. George Smith's *Life of John Wilson* 126 an instance of a yogi in India lying motionless in the sun, his nails grown into his cheeks, with a bird's nest built upon his head. A charming version of the story, attributed to the monk Solomon, a reputed disciple of Coemgen, is given by O'Daly (*B N nE* 2.155) which *Life* he says was "written leisurely by me Hugh O'Daly,—the 21st day of January, 1725 A. D. in the town of Dublin." (*B N nE* 2.151.)

¹⁹⁰ *Works*, ed. Dimock 5.116.

dam tempore hominum frequentiam ex consuetudine fugiens, solitudine quadam, tugurio modico, quo sole tantum et pluvia defenderetur, soli contemplationi vacans, lectioni et orationi insistebat. Qui cum manum, more solito, per fenestram ad coelum elevaret, ei forte merula insedit, et quasi nido fungens ova posuit. Cui sanctus tanta patientia et mansuetudine compassus est, ut nec manum clauderet nec retraheret; sed usque ad plenam pullorum exclusionem eam infatiganter extenderet et aparet. In hujus autem signi perpetuam memoriam, omnes imagines sancti Keivini per Hiberniam in manu extensa merulam habent." The legend has had wide currency. In religious art, Coemgen is represented holding a blackbird's nest in his hand. So he appears in drawings of carvings, reputed to have been of the 7th century which once adorned the east window of the Cathedral of Glendalough.¹⁹¹

The tiny wren has a curiously mixed and contradictory reputation in both folk-lore and fable—king of the birds and bird accursed, gifted with power of counsel and prophecy, and slain as bearing ill-fortune. "O tiny wren, most scant of tail!" Cel-lach cries in his death-song, "Dolefully thou hast piped prophetic lay; surely thou art come to betray me, and to curtail my gift of life". The supposition, sometimes offered, seems rather far-fetched that Christian teachers, combating paganism, singled out the small bird for commination as embodying belief in magic divination. O'Curry points out two tracts written by a late scribe in blank spaces left in *Codex H* 317 that seem to show that the Irish must have domesticated the raven and the wren for purposes of divination.¹⁹² However this may be, there is no question that the wren's name *dren* was construed as meaning 'druid-bird'. So it appears in *Cormac's Glossary*,¹⁹³ and again in set terms in the story of Saint Moling which follows.

The three servitors of Saint Colmán, midge, mouse and cock, have been told of above.¹⁹⁴ Saint Moling, it seems, had a fly

¹⁹¹ Nicholson, Asenath: *Lights and Shades of Ireland*, 167.

¹⁹² *Manners and Customs*, 2.223f; see *RC* 8.125 "Prognostications from the Raven and the Wren," for tracts tr. R. I. Best.

¹⁹³ 62 cited *VSH* 2.200 n1.

¹⁹⁴ See p. 94f.

which used to sing to him when he came from Matins. A true tragedy unfolds of how the wren, "mage of the birds, because for some it provides auguries and is itself tiniest of birds", snapped up the fly, and retribution followed. "Quodam die legens sanctus pontifex Molyng sedendo in quodam loco cum suo ministro, venit ad eum illa auis que dicitur magus auium, eo quod aliquibus prebet augurium, et ipsa est minima auis; et habebat illa muscam viuam et vlulantem in rostro suo. Et in conspectu viri Dei deuorans auicula muscam, muriceps apprehendit ipsam auiculam, et statim occidit eam, et cepit acriter comedere. Videns sanctus Molyng hanc miseriam, motus est misericordia; et imperavit muricipi ut de faucibus suis auiculam remitteret. Et ilico muriceps audiens uocem sancti, cum timore et tremore mortuam et semicommettam auiculam de guttere suo in terram proiecit. Signansque sanctus pontifex cadauer auis, ipsa surrexit uiua et sana, et sanguine suo cruentata. Et imperauit ei sanctus ut muscam quam deglutiuit coram eo euomeret; et statim auicula euomuit muscam, quasi fimi particulam, de uentriculo suo. Et benedicens uir sanctus illud monstrulum, surrexit inde musca ualida et circumuolabat sonans. Auis autem ad sua, gaudendo garriens, euolauit. Hec videns minister sancti Molyng, egressus est ad fratres, et hec mirabilia narrauit eis." ¹⁹⁵

This is not all, for in the Irish *Life* in manuscripts by O'Clery ¹⁹⁶ there is an additional sensation. The wren receives the full weight of the saint's curse, and that is why the poor bird shall ever suffer persecution. A madman and a fox lived with him, "also a wren and a little fly that used to buzz to him when he came from Matins, till the wren hopped on it and killed it; and this killing by the wren was displeasing to him, so that he cursed the wren. 'Howbeit but he that marred for me the poor fly that used to be making music for me, let his dwelling be forever in empty houses with a wet drip therein continually, and may children and young persons be destroying him.'" ¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ *VSH* 2.200.

¹⁹⁶ *RC* 27.303 (from *Liber Flauus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms*), tr. by Whitley Stokes.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Wood-Martin: *Elder Faiths*, 2.147f.

One would certainly like to know what lies behind the bird's evil repute. It is the occasion of the cruel practice of "Hunting the Wren" on Christmas day in Kerry. The day is Saint Stephen's day in the Isle of Man, the story being that a wren woke a sleeping guard just as the proto-martyr was on point of escaping. Men carrying a box with "Kitty Wren's" body within it appears at the doors of the gentry, beating tins, and asking a reward for killing the wren. In Scandinavia, some sort of kelpie or lorelei, doomed to appear as a wren once a year because of sailors enticed to their death, is the reason why the wren is hunted down. In various localities, a wren's feather saves from drowning.¹⁹⁸ Yet despite her evil repute, a wren was permitted by Saint Malo to nest in his cowl.¹⁹⁹

Other stories could be gathered outside the *Lives* having to do with small birds. Saint Ailbe's master bade the boy keep the sparrows from the harvest-field. School could not be missed, so Ailbe shut up all the sparrows in a house nearby, and went to school. Only half-believing the story, the master went to see. Not a sparrow was to be found. To this day, water from Saint Ailbe's well, sprinkled on the harvest-fields, will keep the tiny robbers away.²⁰⁰ When Saint Finnian de Cluain came to console the holy men who lived on the island of Echni, they rejoiced, for no harm could come from the sparrows while he sojourned with them.²⁰¹ If the lark sings on Saint Brigit's day, February 1st, the first day of the Irish spring, good weather is assured. This, no doubt, springs from the legend that the lark's song wakened Brigit each morning to another day of praise, prayer and service for her Lord.²⁰² According to tradition,²⁰³ the skylark fell under Saint Kevin's bann. The masons and laborers in building his monastery in the glen were losing their health and vigor, for their labor was regulated by the maxim

¹⁹⁸ Ditchfield, P. H., *Old English Customs* 3-33; Dyer, T. F., *English Folk-lore* 67f.

¹⁹⁹ *V S H* 1.cxlvi, n 14.

²⁰⁰ Cited from Canon Powers' *History of Limerick* by Canon O'Hanlon: *Irish Saints* 9.283.

²⁰¹ *C S* 193.

²⁰² Lady Gregory: *Visions and Beliefs* 213.

²⁰³ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 89fn.

“to rise with the lark and lie down with the lamb”. The lark used to rise so uncommonly early that it led to great handicap for the laborers. Because of this, “the lark should never be permitted to sing in Glendalough”.

A reference must, assuredly, be made to Saint Colmán’s ducks, which, long after his death, frequented a pool fed from his holy well near the old church of Templeshambo in Wexford.²⁰⁴ After Saint Colmán’s death they continued under his special protection. Giraldus tells us the birds were teal. If there were any disrespect offered to the Church, the clergy or the ducks themselves, the whole flock betook themselves to a distant lake. The water of the pond grew muddy and putrid, unfit for the use of man or beast. The ducks returned only when the offender was punished, when the water would regain its clarity. They were tame, eating from the hand, and could not be harmed, in particular they could not be cooked. Nobody thought of harming them, but unluckily sometimes, people fetching water from the pond on a dark night, might bring one of them away and put the water and the bird in a pot to be boiled. No matter how hot the fire, the water still remained cold and the little duck would be found swimming contentedly on the water. When the duck was returned to the pond, the water would boil without more ado. Animals that offered insult to the ducks were peremptorily punished. A kite that carried off one of the birds was stricken dead when he set about killing the duck, which flew back unharmed to the flock. A fox with a duck in his mouth ran into a cell dedicated to the saint to eat his prize, but he was found next morning choked, and the little duck alive and well, its head in the beast’s mouth, and its body in the fox’s throat. In remote Inishmurray in Sligo Bay there were, also, some of Saint Colmán’s ducks, and the same story is current there. They could not be cooked, or harmed in any way.

It is said that the beautiful tale of Lir’s children changed to swans so moved the men of Erin that the killing of swans was prohibited by law. The admiration felt for the beautiful and romantic birds assuredly appears in the story of how Saint

²⁰⁴ Giraldus *Works*, ed. by Dimock 5.117f. The account in the *Acta Sanctorum* (12 Oct. 282f) is taken from Giraldus.

Comgall's monks at Lough Foyle begged him, in place of their receiving the solace of food, to cause the swans to come to him so that they might touch the lovely birds. "Tunc enim fratres debebant comedere, set commestio non erat eis in promptu. Pius pater ait eis: 'Si uoluntas Dei est, fiat.' Ad hanc uocem cieni diuino nutu coacti, uolauerunt ad seruos Christi, et vnus eorum uolatu stetit in sinu sancti senis Comgalli. Et iterum, accepta licentia, redierunt ad lacum."²⁰⁵ Swans of Killarney led to the conversion of twelve doubting 'laici', unconverted pagans. They said they would believe if the God whom Cainnech was preaching would make the swans swimming in the lake fly over their heads. Using the time-honored formula, Cainnech replied: "Omnipotentia Deo possibilia sunt omnia licet apud homines difficilia". At once two swans rose above the heads of the company, and "alter super sancti Cainnici ollam stetit". The twelve thereupon believed, made their submission, and became monks.²⁰⁶ In the monastery of Colum MacCrimthann of Terryglass on the beautiful island of Iniscaltra on Lough Dergh—so famous that the life of Saint Senán tells of seven ships arriving in the Shannon crowded with students to attend its school—Colum was on such intimate terms with the birds that haunted the islands that swans regularly carried him over to a solitary island where he was wont to go to pray. "Aliam quoque insulam huic insule Erci propinquam sanctus Columba adiit, et in illa insula frequenter orare solebat. Quadam autem die cum sanctus Columba ad illam insulam exire uoluisset, nec erat navis in promptu, cigni venerunt ad eum, et supra humeros eorum sedens, suis pennis suavissimo carmine ad insulam istam leniter portaverunt eum trans mare. Et sic semper in quacumque hora sanctus Columba iter agere inter istas duas insulas uoluisset, cigni suis alis uehebant eum cito."²⁰⁷

It is interesting to note here the old and widespread belief that the feathers of the swan produce melodious sounds as it flies. This curiously enough has a basis in fact.²⁰⁸ The legend

²⁰⁵ *Boll* 2 Mai 585; *V S H* 2.16.

²⁰⁶ *V S H* 1.165f.

²⁰⁷ *C S* 456f.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Tupper, Frederick, *Riddles of the Exeter Book* 82f., notes on Riddle 8.

that the swan itself sings only just before death — which finds most exquisite expression in English literature in George Eliot's lovely lyric in *The Spanish Gypsy*—does not appear in the Old English riddle. It was apparently unknown, (unless the singing was held miraculous like the bird's visits) to those who handed down the tradition how when Saint Colmán and his family were building a "great work", a causeway as an approach to their monastery in Ferceall, near Lynally, swans, so it seems, used to come to sing to them, so relieving the fatigue of their heavy toil. Hence the place was called 'Lanna Ela', Swan's Land.²⁰⁹

Size, color, uncanny even demonic intelligence may give the raven impressive appearances in legend, but notoriously he is prone to evil, in particular, like all his tribe, to thievery. It was a raven who stole the working-glove of Columbanus at Luxeuil, thrown down on a stone near his door. Looking for it, Columbanus said, "There is no one who would venture to touch any thing without permission, except the bird which was sent out by Noah, and did not return to the Ark." The raven, he added, would not be able to feed its young till the glove was returned. The bird brought it back, humbly awaiting punishment till the saint bade it go.²¹⁰ Was it, one wonders, from knowing the raven's habit in the wild of devouring nestlings or small birds, or perhaps from seeing a pet raven, that led Saint Moecca's mother, when she saw him, as a small child, "gnawing a bone", to say "Yon is my little wee raven!" — whence he was called Féchín, "little raven".²¹¹

The raven fell into ill-repute even with Coemgen, lover of all birds. When the doe came to be milked for Coemgen's fosterling, Faellan, son of Colmán Tanist, the vessel full of milk was placed on the ground by a monk, and a raven or crow overturned it with his bill; "coruus rapax uoluit illud bibere", whereupon Saint Coemgen declared, "Thou and birds of thy species shall repent this fault". He stated further, "When I,

²⁰⁹ *Br. Colman E.* c 3 cited in *VSH* 1.cxlvi.

²¹⁰ Migne, P. L. 87 Jonas' "Life of Columbanus", *Translations and Reprints* 2 No. 7 15; *Capg* 1.209.

²¹¹ *Fél²* 48f; cf. *ibid.* 150, 120, 180, 242.

Coemgen, am dying, these birds shall not partake of food (his body), and if you have the audacity to touch the blood of slain animals with general satisfaction, death shall immediately overtake you! But you shall be on the tops of the surrounding mountains cawing and contending in discontent among yourselves!’’²¹² Commentators can find nothing of the marvelous here, for surely wherever crows are gathered together, they are clamorous enough.²¹³ Giraldus informs us that the ravens on Saint Kevin’s feast-day neither come on the ground nor taste food, making a loud caw of contrition probably, and this because they spilled the milk of Kevin’s scholar.²¹⁴

Two stories are especially striking. One concerns ravens that had made themselves a nuisance to Saint Cuthbert. They were commanded in Christ’s Name to leave, and did so, but three days later one of them returned, and at the saint’s feet very contritely and sadly moved his wings as if lamenting. Later, he returned with a companion carrying a fat pig as a peace offering. Cuthbert remarked to the brothers the birds’ penitence and reparation, hence “Multis post hec annis in ipsa insula manentes nidificabant nec aliquid molestie cuiquam inferre presumebant’’²¹⁵

The second is a very strange incident, impossible to rationalize and one for which it would be difficult to find a parallel except in folk-tales. The saint one day was contemplating heaven in his cell, singing his psalms, when his mother, Fimmaech, a woman noted for her physical beauty, said to him: “Quam pulchre sunt gene tue, fili, et quam speciosi oculi tui”. Fearing lest his corporal beauty might be the occasion of sin, Cuanna tore out first the right eye, then the left. Two ravens came from the vicinity, seized his eyes, and ran away. “Vir Dei” felt very great grief and sighed. Then God mercifully “advenit et limpidissimos oculos veluti columbarum sibi restituit. . . . Tunc

²¹² *Boll* 1 Junii 312; *V S H* 1.251.

²¹³ This may serve as another example of penance exacted on animals, to add to those above, p. 44f.

²¹⁴ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright 89.

²¹⁵ *Cappg* 1.225.

illud Daviticum potuit psallere versum: 'Revela oculos meos et considerabo mirabilia de lege tua.' ''²¹⁶

The raven's less aristocratic cousin the crow was kept as a pet by the great Saint Brendan of Clonfert.²¹⁷ Both crow and raven are addressed as scavenging birds in Cellach's death-song: "O scall-crow, grey-coated, sharp-beaked, paltry fowl! the intent of thy desire is apparent to me, no friend art thou to Cellach. O raven, thou that makest croaking! if hungry thou be now, O bird! from this same rath depart not until thou have thy surfeit of my flesh."²¹⁸

Even as harmless a bird as the partridge may display original sin—until chastened. One day when brother Finanus was making his oblation in a certain church, a partridge flew through the window and seized the "oblacionem" in his beak. Molua made the sign of the cross after the bird and it arose. "Ipsa iam avis postea in vita sua familiaris fuit inter fratres."²¹⁹

The kite is graphically described, as we have seen in Cellach's death-song,²²⁰ "Fiercely the kite of Cluain-Eo's yew-tree will take part in the scramble; his horn-hued talons full he'll carry off, he will not part from me in kindness". Birds of the hawk kind find place in but two stories in the *Lives*. Ciarán of Saighir was born on Cape Clear on the most southerly coast of Ireland. Here, while yet a child, he "made a beginning of his miracles". Playing in the fields, he saw a great hawk swoop down and lift a little bird from her nest. Compassion for the bird filled Ciarán; he stopped and lifted it in his hands, then tenderly bade it rise and be whole.²²¹ A thieving hawk and his kind were made the caretakers of poultry belonging to Saint Tigernach: "Quadam uero altera die accipitrem galline pullum rapientem aspiciens, pius pater, uisceribus caritatis plenus, eidem precepit ut pullum matri sine ulla lesione permitteret. Vixque

²¹⁶ *CS* 933f; *Ériu*, 8,122 "Prognostications from the Raven and the Wren," ed. and tr. R. I. B.

²¹⁷ *Féil* 112.

²¹⁸ *Silva Gad* 2.59 (from *Lebar Brece*).

²¹⁹ *VSH* 2.218.

²²⁰ See p. 180.

²²¹ *Boll* 1 Martii 392; *Silva Gad* 2.2 (*Egerton* from *Codex Kilkenniensis* John Colgan.)

verba compleuerat, et statim precepto uiri Dei obtemperans, pullum galline remisit. Insuper, ne ausu temerario id reiterare presumeret, ei sub interdicto sic precepit, dicens: 'Tu, tuique generis aues, ab hoc die in posterum Gabalniensis monasterii gallinarum custodes eritis, non raptores'." ²²² The hawk as an instrument of vengeance appears in the dramatic story of Findián of Clonard. Muiredach, King of Leinster, had given the cleric leave to build his church where he pleased in his kingdom. Bresal the King's son and Bishop Crimthann his brother, repulsed the saint, the former boldly seizing his hand. Findián prophesied that in twenty-four hours the hand stretched forth to refuse him should be in a hawk's talons and laid before him, and the Bishop's cloister should not be high on earth. Bresal was killed in a raid of the Ossorians on the morrow and the hawk brought his hand and laid it down in the saint's presence. ²²³ Quite as obedient was Saint Brigit's falcon, noted by Giraldus, that very obliging bird, which perched on the roof tree of Kildare, catching ducks and other birds at the beck and call of knights or townspeople. ²²⁴

Eagles figure in the *Lives* in two stories at least. In the first an eagle took the fish from the mimes who had so boldly demanded of Saint Fintan, carried it to a tree above the stone from which the fish had been taken, and let it fall, the fish going back into the stone from which it had been drawn. ²²⁵ An eagle was commanded by the Irish Saint Cuthbert to bring his companions and himself food. Obeying, the bird brought fish from the river. ²²⁶

The metaphorical use of a bird's name has been noted above in the sobriquet of Saint Moeca. Other examples appear—Saint Brigit was styled "the Dove of the Oak" in reference to her "cell of the oak", Kildare. The most notable example is the Irish name of the great Columba of Iona, 'Columcille', "Dove of the Church", ²²⁷ given him, so the story goes, because of his

²²² *V S H* 2.268.

²²³ *L S* 225.

²²⁴ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 98f.

²²⁵ *C S* 233.

²²⁶ *Capg* 1.221.

²²⁷ *Félz* 145.

gentleness as a boy and his fondness for praying in the little church near his birth-place, or perhaps when with Saint Finnián. Exiled under the charge of having been the cause of the bloody battle of Culdremhne, following, as his legend tells, upon his copying of Finnián's Psalter without permission, he made his way to Iona to enter upon the missionary labors that were to make his name so truly memorable. To understand the strange and touching story that follows, one must remember that he is pictured as moved by a passionate love and longing for his country, and became one ready to pity and console those suffering from homesickness, so that Donegal boys on the eve of departure for America or elsewhere would pass the night on 'Colum's flag', his stone bed, that his blessing might avert from them the pain and longing that he had suffered. This pain and longing are written into the exquisite lament for Erin, ascribed to him, in which he bethinks him how happy Cormac, the son of Dima, must be at the approach of summer along the green hillsides of Durrow amid the fair slopes, waving woods, and singing birds, compared with himself on the barren shores of bleak Iona:

"A grey eye looks back towards Erin
A grey eye full of tears."

With the birds and beasts about Loch Foyle, we are told, he was so familiar that, as he sailed away, they seemed to be calling him back. "And it was not the folk of his land that were heavy and sorrowful after Columcille", says Manus O'Donnell,²²⁸ "but the birds and the senseless creatures were sorrowful after him. And in token of this thing, the seagulls and the birds of Loch Foyle were pursuing on both sides of the boat, screaming and screeching for grief that Columcille was leaving Erin. And he understood that they were uttering speech of sorrow as he would understand it from human folk; and so great was his gentleness and his love for his land and the place of his birth that no greater was his sorrow in parting from her human folk than his sorrow in parting from the seagulls and birds of Loch Foyle. And in witness of this story a crane went to seek Colum-

²²⁸ *Betha Colaim Chille* 195f.

cille from Erin to Iona in Alba as Saint Adamnan maketh known." It is this legend that concerns us here, having to do with Columcille's period of exile. On a certain Saturday after Columcille had read his office, "unum de Fratribus ad se vocans, sic compellat: 'Tertia ab hac illucescente die, expectare debebis in occidentali hujus insulae parte, super maris oram sedens. Nam de aquilonali Hiberniae regione, quaedam hospita grus, ventis per longos aeris agitata circuitus, post nonam diei horam, valde defessa et fatigata superveniet; et pene consumptis viribus, coram te in littore cadens, recumbet; quam misericorditer sublevare curabis, et ad propinquam deportabis domum; ibidemque hospitaliter receptam, per tres dies et noctes ei ministrans, solcite cibabis; et post expleto recreata triduo, nolens ultra apud nos peregrinari, ad priorem Scotiae dulcem, unde orta, remeabit regionem, plene resumptis viribus: quam ideo tibi sic diligenter commendo, quia de nostrae paternitatis regione est oriunda.' Obsecundat Frater, tertiaque die post horam nonam, et jussus, praescitae adventum praestolatur hospitae; advenientemque de littore levat lapsam, ad hospitium portat infirmam, esurientem cibant. Cui ad monasterium vespere reverso Sanctus, non interrogans, sed narrans, ait; 'Benedicat te Deus, Fili; quia peregrinae bene ministrasti hospitae quae in peregrinatione non demorabitur, sed post ternos soles ad patriam repedabit. Quod ita ut Sanctus praedixit, et res etiam probavit. Nam trinalibus hospita diebus, coram hospite ministro de terra se primum volando elevans in sublime, paulisperque in aere viam speculata, oceani transvadato aequore, ad Hiberniam recto volatus cursu, die repedavit tranquillo.'" ²²⁹ This crane, one must suppose, had been that pet crane of Columcille's before he was exiled, of which we hear elsewhere.

Cranes may seem curious birds to keep as pets in spite of their beauty, their quaintness, and their intelligence. All the references to them, as it happens, concern, apparently, pet cranes, except a mention in the life of Saint Abbán, "Loch na Corr, id est stagnum gruum", ²³⁰ and the story how, when the

²²⁹ *Boll* 2 Junii 209 (citing Adamn 48).

²³⁰ *V S H* 1.27.

cranes were making themselves a nuisance—"alio tempore grues multe in vnum agmen collecte sunt et valde nocebant hominibus comedentes multum fenum et grana"—Ailbe directed his disciples to drive them like sheep into captivity and the next day addressed them, bidding them disperse into various places.²³¹

The stories, including that of Columcille, in which pet cranes appear, are variants on a stock motive, the picking out, by a pet crane, of a person's eye, thereby punishing curious spying, and preferably, because so neatly sensational and manageable only for a long-billed bird, through a key-hole. The *Latin Lives*, the *Irish Lives*, and floating tradition, all have variants of the story. For example, in the life of Saint Flannán, we hear of a youth who spied upon the saint, while he worked at night by the light of his five fingers. The saint ordered the tame crane to pick out his eye. "Nam cum idem juvenis cursitans rem ordine gestam pandere citius desideraret, juxta viri sancti imprecationem grus antelata in hostio celle puero celerarii unum oculorum rostro terebravit. Cujus vulneris dolore puer idem clamans ac plangens, circumstantibus claustrii senioribus ac sancto patri Molue que miracula queque lumina erga virum Dei in molendino fierent, quanta etiam proprii corporis dampna pro tam furialibus ausis receperit, lacrimosis questibus intimavit."²³² Likewise the story appears in the life of Saint Senán.²³³ When Saint Senán took his turn in the mill at grinding the corn, the "praepositus" sent a messenger to the saint; the man incautiously looked in at the window and beheld the saint at his devotions, the five fingers of his left hand for light, and a beautiful young man assisting him at his work. Senán knowing that he was spied on said immediately,

"Quia vidisti illicita, poena plecteris debita
Et qui haec vidit, oculum cito dolebis erutum:
Nam a grue caecaberis quando claustrum intraveris
Quo post triste colloquium reverso ad Praepositum
Grus, qui illic adfuerat, ut Senanus praedixerat,
Fecit in eum impetum, eique evulsit oculum."

²³¹ *V S H* 1.62.

²³² *C S* 647f.

²³³ *Boll* 1 Martii 763.

In the *Book of Lismore*, a pet crane of Ciarán of Cluain picks out the eye of a miserly gillie.²³⁴ At a time of scarcity of corn and sustenance for the school, a ration was brought to Ciarán by an owner of a certain mill, "even three loaves of wheat with their proportion of bacon and of flesh, and a vessel full of ale", which food Ciarán made into little bits and cast into the mill, "and cast in the ale (also), and made wheaten bread of them all", lest all the brethren should not partake. The servant secretly kept the wheaten bread and Ciarán set a curse on him, "May a crane take thine eye out of thy head, and may it be on thy cheek when thou goest home!" Thus it came to pass, but the master of the mill came with the servant and offered Ciarán "the mill with all its land for the healing of the gillie". Ciarán setting his palm against the eye put it into its place, making the sign of the cross over it "so that it was every whit whole". A like story told of Saint Foillan is recorded by Canon O'Hanlon.²³⁵

These analogues, preparing us for the story of Columcille, may perhaps lessen the shock to our sensibilities occasioned by the contrast we may feel between the severity and cruelty the story seems to attribute to Columcille—like that of the story above in ordering the too-fond father to pitch his son into the sea—and the gentleness and loving-kindness elsewhere attributed to him. The story was probably adapted originally from some earlier source, perhaps classical, and became a stock-motive. It is not attached to Columcille until the Irish life of Manus O'Donnell.²³⁶ Columcille is reported to have been a skilled scribe and a surpassing artist with the pen—it will be remembered that he made a surreptitious copy of the Psalter of Finnián. Some believe him to be the Colum who wrote the *Book of Kells*, one of the most beautiful books in the world. At the time of this story, he was copying a book "after hours"—some think it was perhaps the *Carthach* or *Battler*, the copy of the Gospels whose romantic story may be read in Doctor Douglas Hyde's

²³⁴ P. 269f.

²³⁵ *Irish Saints* 1.136.

²³⁶ *Betha Colaim Chille* 177.

*Literary History.*²³⁷ When evening came, Columcille had five candles, the five fingers of his right hand. One of Saint Findián's clerics was sent after the book of which Columcille, Findián's pupil, against the latter's desire, was making a copy. With all his gentleness, Columcille did not lack fire, when righteously aroused. He had no sympathy for the curious witness of the wonders of God in his regard. Turning to his pet crane he said, "Thou hast my leave, if thou hast leave of God, to pluck out the eye of the youth that comes to spy on me without my knowledge". Nothing loth, the crane put his beak through the keyhole, and obeyed. As if to make amends, Findián, the father-abbot of the curious cleric healed his disciple's eye, "sained" it, as they say in Irish.²³⁸

This double association of cranes with Columcille finds yet a third in the legend of his return to Ireland — blindfolded and with earth from Iona inside his sandals, because his penance enjoined he must never again behold or tread the soil of Erin — on hearing that the high king Aedh, stirred by satires, had called a convention of nobles, scholars, and ecclesiastics, vowing extinction of the whole bardic order. Appearing at the meeting, the blindfolded, white-habited monk by his eloquence turned the minds of the assembly and saved the poets. But the Queen, with her son Conal, remained wrathful and ill-content, and she sent a messenger to the King, "Go to Aedh and say that if he show respect to this crane-cleric, I will not be peaceable to himself". Columcille resented the woman's insulting phrase 'crane-cleric' and behold, the Queen and her hand-maid were changed into cranes, so to remain till Doomsday, and still even now, at the ford, people know them as the "two old cranes of Druim-ceatta".²³⁹

If now it is asked how Columcille came to have this close association with the crane, one is almost wholly at a loss. The one possible theory that suggests itself is that Columcille actually had a pet crane, that the story of the picking out of the eye of

²³⁷ P. 177ff.

²³⁸ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 177.

²³⁹ *LS* 311 (from *Edinburgh Ms.*); O'Donnell, Manus, *Betha Colaim Chille* 349; Lady Gregory: *Book of Saints and Wonders* 40f.

the messenger spying upon him, possibly derived from some classical source or folk-tale, became attached to him and was transferred to other saints, or was told of some earlier, and that the crane that visited him from Ireland was the crane that had been his pet in Ireland before his exile. It is true that a crane seems to us a curious bird to have as a pet, but it may be pointed out that cranes are mentioned as pets in the *Brehon Laws*,²⁴⁰ which record "a 'smacht-fine' for pet herons and hens and pet deer and pet wolves and pet old birds (i. e., hawks) and pet foxes", and an additional pledge upon them for trespass.²⁴¹

A picturesque legend concerning the cuckoo (but with stork as a variant) tells how Ciarán of Saighir was called from the solitude he loved by hearing that the king, Dymma, had taken the maid Brunnecha, who had vowed herself to God. Refusing to return her, the king in derision said "Si . . . per vocem cuculi me mane cras de somno feceris excitari, tuam obtinebis discipulam. Hoc vero dicebat, quia tunc hyems erat. Illa nocte, licet in omni terra ningebat, hospitium tamen Kerani nullatenus nix attingebat: aurora vero revocante diem, ecce cuculus vociferat in culmine cujusdam domus, cumque per hoc Regulus a somno excitaretur, irruiat super eum formido et pavor magnitudinis miraculi: diuque dubitans utrum dimitteret illam nec ne (quia timor urgebat, amor impediabat) in fine, timore saeviturae irae compulsus, tandem eam concessit: sed piger et pavidus".²⁴²

One reference of exceptional intrinsic interest must find place here as treating, at least nominally, of a saint's life and making dramatic use of the wild creatures of the forest, notably of the birds, but in a relation and manner that is in accord with secular poetic tradition, and far removed from what one finds in hagiographic literature. Strictly speaking, the story falls outside the chosen limits of our material, but it is too interesting in itself and affords too striking a contrast to be left unnoted. The saint in question, Saint Cellach, may never have existed; no historical evidence concerning him has as yet been discovered.²⁴³ The

²⁴⁰ 4.115.

²⁴¹ Cf. also for pet cranes, *LS* 270.

²⁴² *Boll* 1 Martii 393; *VSH* 1.220f; *Capg* 2.322; *BN nE* 2.112; *Silva Gad* 2.5f (*Egerton*, from *Codex Kilkenniensis*, John Colgan).

²⁴³ Kenney, 457.

Bollandists, however, record his festival as of May 1, and give the story of his death and his death-song. It is difficult not to believe that some legend of an actual saint, perhaps of some foreign saint adopted and localized, underlies the epic enhancements of the tragic tale that has come down to us.²⁴⁴ The story is that Cellach, a King's son, then a student under Saint Ciarán at Clonmacnois, left the monastery in the expectation that he should become King in despite of Ciarán's prophetic warning that he should die by the sword. Moved by jealousy, Guaire banished him from the Kingdom, and he fled with four followers, his close kin, to an island in Loch Con. Guaire's jealousy still reached out for him. He sent, inviting the saint to a feast. Cellach refused, whereupon the King's messengers asked that the saint's four followers might return with them to bring back further word from the King. The King solicited them by rich bribes to kill their kinsman and leader, and they return to perpetrate their crime. Cellach begged for one night's respite, and the traitors searched for a secure place for his keeping and found a hollow oak with a narrow entrance. Here they watched while their victim lay overcome with deep sleep. He made no attempt to flee, knowing only too well that Ciarán's prophecy was to be proved true—indeed, the traitors would easily overtake him, "he being but emaciated and feeble after Lent".

When the dawn came, Cellach, knowing it was his last, dreaded to look upon it, shut the opening of the tree, then chiding himself for his lack of faith, opened it wide. All the creatures of the forest were alive with anticipation of what was to come. "The Raven called and the Scall-crow and the Wren and all the other birds. The Kite of Cluain-Eo's yew-tree came, and the red Wolf of Druim-mic-dar, the deceiver whose lair was by the island's landing-place." Cellach's dream that "wild dogs should rend him and drag him through the bracken" was about to be fulfilled. It was then that, moved to the very depths of his being, fearless, though sorrowing for his untimely end, the soul of Cellach spoke and found expression for the depths of emotion that stirred him in a beautiful and deeply touching

²⁴⁴ *Lebar Brecc* given in part in *SG* 1.59.

death-song, opening with a lyrical invocation to the morning, with its flooding light that once lay across the pages of his little book in his student days, but now was to look upon the hideous fate his mangled body was to suffer, brought about by the shameful treachery of his own kinsmen and followers, till at the close his spirit triumphs over mortal ills through the vision and words of the Son of Mary, "Thou must have earth, thou shalt have heaven. Welcome awaits thee, Cellach." As Cellach had predicted, "all preying things" that ate of his flesh died. "Ad corpus autem viri Sancti, quod inhumatum, reliquere, ferarum volucrumque rapacium greges, prout ipse futurum praedixit, convenerunt, quorum quotquot ejus carnem aut sanguinem delibarunt, illico virtute divina et meritis Sancti Praesulis interierunt." ²⁴⁵

An interesting parallel with this detail of the story is the prediction of Saint Fintan that the old workman of Saint Lomanus would die in the forest and that his body would not be discovered for six days, yet no beast, no bird, not even Reynard himself would come near it. ²⁴⁶

Saint Brigit's power of attracting birds is often mentioned. "Aves et anates sepe ad se venire precepit, et manu illas tangens et palpan, redire permisit." ²⁴⁷ A charming picture of her surrounded by wild ducks is given by Cogitosus, ²⁴⁸ one that recalls Captain Noel's account of the lama in Tibet sent out to feed the wild ducks and geese at Thasa every year during the breeding season, who knows them individually, gives them names, has them rest on his shoulders and talks to them, a Tibetan Saint Francis high among the Himalayas. ²⁴⁹ Cogitosus says, "Et cum in alia die anates pectore carnali in aqua natantes, et per aera interdum volitantes, Beata vidisset Brigida, eas ad se venire accersivit. Quae pennigero volatu, et tanto ardore obedientiae, ejus vocibus, tamquam sub humana cura essent consuetae, sine ulla formidine multitudinis ad eam volitabant. Quas manu

²⁴⁵ *Boll* 1 Mai 109.

²⁴⁶ *V S H* 2.99f.

²⁴⁷ *Capg* 1.159.

²⁴⁸ *Boll* 1 Feb. 134, 138.

²⁴⁹ Noel, John: *The Story of Everest* 42.

tangens et amplectens, et per aliquantulum temporis hoc idem faciens, redire ac volare suis in aera alis permisit, collaudans creatorem omnium rerum invisibilem per creaturas visibiles, cui omnia subjecta sunt animantia, et cui omnia vivunt, ut quidam ait, officio gerendi. Et ex omnibus manifeste intelligi potest, quod omnis natura bestiarum et pecorum et volucrum subjecta ejus fuit imperio.”

The poet Dallan Forgaill, a contemporary of Columcille, who wrote the book called *Praise of Columcille*, after the saint had defended the poets at the meeting in Druimceatt, wrote in that same book that “Columcille understood the voice of the birds of the air and of the beasts of the sea.”²⁵⁰ Coemgen, too, understood the language of bird and beast. “Et quia ad statum innocentie, ut decuit, reductus erat, fere ei erant familiares, avesque humeris ejus insidebant et manibus atque circumvolantes dulciter modulabantur; arborum etiam rami atque folia intolerabilem ipsius laborem delectabili relevabant consonancia. Quibus autem interea vixerit alimentis, quoniam ipse hoc nulli revelavit, incertum habetur.”²⁵¹ And the birds made a playmate of Columba of Terryglass, for we read,²⁵² “Habitavit autem Columba in insula Keltra multo tempore; et aves celi familiariter illic adherebant ei et volantes circa faciem ejus ludebant”.

10. *Fish*

The references to fish are naturally numerous because of their abundance in Irish waters and their importance both as a staple article of food and as prescribed for use in fasting. Several of the stories in which they appear are exceptionally strange and diverting. Giraldus notes three special kinds of fish: “a sort of trout called also ‘salares’, white, close-grained and good-flavoured”; the *tymal*, commonly called the umber, “and a third sort exactly resembles the trout, except that it has no spots”.²⁵³ Few in the *Lives* are identified by name—the salmon often, the eel once. Shell-fish and crustaceans, if they may be admitted here by courtesy, are not mentioned.

²⁵⁰ O'Donnell, Manus, *Betha Colaim Chille* 417.

²⁵¹ *CS* 837f.

²⁵² *CS* 453f.

²⁵³ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 26.

A lively appreciation of the innumerable strange creatures inhabiting the sea appears in the tale of how Saint Déclán, because of the animosity of the Dési in hiding his ship, struck the sea with his staff in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, signing it with the sign of the Cross. The sea retired, and the marine animals were scarcely quick enough to follow, so that many were left behind. Déclán with his staff pursued the returning ocean, but the sea was heaving in a great tumult, the marine animals sending forth discordant sounds, and opening their mouths in an unusual manner. The disciples were terrified, seeing the monsters of the deep, but the saint bade the sea be still, and it made a great shore, the "good and profitable land of Trahmore".²⁵⁴ Similarly in that exciting episode in the imrama in which huge sea-beasts are seen through the transparent water on the ocean floor, Brendan's companions fear. The saint was celebrating the feast of Peter, and his companions "saw the sea all round them so pellucid, bright and clear that they saw all the fish and monsters of the ocean like so many herds of cattle on wide level plains, forming as it were walls around the boat." The brethren begged Brendan to sing Mass in a low voice that the monsters might not hear. Brendan asked them, "Why do you fear, my brothers, seeing that our God and Lord, Who can tame all living things, will tame these monsters for us". Having spoken thus, he said Mass louder than before, and when the monsters heard the voice of the holy man, they fled from the boat and not a trace of them was seen thenceforth.²⁵⁵ According to another version, it was only at the end of Mass that the monsters fled; during Mass they swam around the boat, but at a distance, and *Rawlinson* 485 adds the beautiful fancy, "ut corpori Creatoris sui viderentur exhibere reverentiam".²⁵⁶

As for the means of catching fish, usually they are said to be 'taken', i. e. by net. There is one mention of hook, but none of line. "Columcille walked beside the sea right oft", says *Manus*

²⁵⁴ *Boll* 5 Julii 600; Douglas, Hyde, *Legends of Saints and Sinners* 90f (tr. from an old *Ms.*).

²⁵⁵ *B N nE* 2.74.

²⁵⁶ *Plummer B N nE* 2.334n.

O'Donnell,²⁵⁷ "beach-combing and hooking fish for the brethren". Nets are spoken of in the *Life of Bairre*, where a fish is caught every night in "a net of a single mesh";²⁵⁸ and again, "a salmon in every net" was the reward of Moling's obedience;²⁵⁹ weirs are referred to frequently, notably in *Brendan* when he and his companions "Nauigauerunt inde ad aliam insulam amenam ualde sed modicam, in qua gurgēs [weir] ad capiendum pisces ab antiquo uidebatur esse".²⁶⁰ Weirs seem to have been the property of individual families, as were the nets, also. A weir belonging to, or at least used by, fishermen who refused fish to Cainnech and his monks, yielded fishes to supply the needs of the brethren, the saint's baculum being used to catch them,²⁶¹ "Tunc sanctus Kainnicus vni de fratribus dixit: 'Cum baculo meo ad tollum perge, et Deus miserebitur nostri.' Ille autem, nomine Sceallanus, perrexit; et, cum baculum sancti in tollum intinxisset, statim piscis mire magnitudinis super illum venit, quem Scellanus ad terram trahens, iterum baculum (in tollum misit), et alium piscem cepit. Manens vero Kainnicus in domo, lumine Spiritus Sancti illud vidit, et dixit: 'O Scellane, sufficit nobis quod captum est! Diuina potentia ille a longe audiuit hunc sermonem, et statim secundum piscem dimisit in mare, et cum 'pisce' prius capto ad domum reddiit.'" Fishponds were almost certainly in use. Saint Ruadán made a fishpond by striking the ground with his staff, but its immediate purpose, at least, was to heal a leper by immersion.²⁶² But ordinary methods of fish-catching seem negligible when one reads, as will appear, of saints plucking fish by hand from the water, or pulling or ploughing them out of dry land.

The distinction drawn between flesh and fish in respect to permissible use on monastic fast-days, as a means of penance, or a self-imposed restriction at all times, leads to an uncon-

²⁵⁷ *Betha Colaim Chille* 437.

²⁵⁸ *BN nE* 2.16.

²⁵⁹ *EC* 27.273 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

²⁶⁰ *VSH* 1.138.

²⁶¹ *VSH* 1.157; *CS* 369.

²⁶² *VSH* 2.249.

scious assumption of an actual difference in nature. This appears in a curious way in a story told of Saint Aidus. He was voyaging to Wales in hope to make Saint David his "soul-friend". Contrary winds held him back and an angel bade him seek Saint Ligidus instead. He appeared before Ligidus with seven followers. There then ensued one of those strange duels in which saints on occasion tested out each other or asserted their rival powers—duels which can hardly be explained otherwise than as a survival from heathen times of the duels of rival pretenders to magical powers known in many countries in actual practice, or as preserved in their literature; such encounters of saints with Druidic mages appear in a number of lives.²⁶³ In the present case Ligidus blessed flesh and it became eight fishes, one for each visitor apparently. Aidus then blessed the fishes and they became flesh. "Sed Ligidus iterum de carne fecit pisces". This interesting demonstration concluded, the two saints thereupon became "soul-friends".²⁶⁴ The extreme asceticism practised by many Irish saints, proceeding, as regards diet, even so far sometimes as a limitation to shredded greens and water alone, finds illustration in the case of Saint Maedoc. Saint Molua in the case cited above²⁶⁵ had provided a fat calf for his guest, but as Maedoc made it a rule to eat no flesh, Molua was forced to turn the flesh into fish. Aed MacBrice came to Bó Finde to visit holy Ryoche, who prepared a great dinner, but since Aed did not eat flesh he blessed it, and bread and fishes and honey were made of it.²⁶⁶ Likewise, at Cochaë's chapel Ciarán changed a gammon of bacon given him for his great company's hospitality, into wheat, honey and fish and "other noble foods".²⁶⁷ A hairy pig was given on Friday by a certain Mudain to Columcille and his men. Columcille boiled the meat, and God "would account it to their honor", Mudain and his folk had bread and butter and fish, but the leavings of Columcille were found to be bread and fish, and those of Mudain

²⁶³ *V S H* 1.clxvf.

²⁶⁴ *C S* 278f; *V S H* 2.219.

²⁶⁵ *V S H* 2.219.

²⁶⁶ *V S H* 1.43.

²⁶⁷ *B N nE* 2.116; *Capg* 2.318.

full of gore and blood, whereupon Columcille cursed "that place and said it should be barren and desolate for all time and that its clerics and scholars should be wolves at nones each day forever."²⁶⁸

A stock motive with many examples, is the blessing of waters to ensure lasting productiveness or populate them when barren. Saint Ronán and his daughter Saint Lasáir lived on the shore of Loch Mor Maeothla where was "the noble fish-abounding estuary". They "blessed the blue-pooled full-fruitful shore of the lake", that it might continue to abound with plenty.²⁶⁹ In Connacht there was a stream with no fish and the people of the neighborhood asked Albeus' aid. Albeus "ostendit eis quinque loca in illo flumine, ut in ipsis piscationes facerent: et ex illa die fluvius iste nimia piscium multitudine repletus est. Et gens illa quinque cellas sancto Albeo obtulit".²⁷⁰ Saint Malachy came to "insula maris in Hybernia" where fish were always plentiful, but lately the fishing had been very poor. The rude and untaught inhabitants were more intent on fishes than on the gospel, and though Malachy assured them that he did not come to them for the purpose of relieving their wants, and that he was more interested in catching men, they still besought him. Kneeling on the shore, the saint prayed, and a great number of fish came, more numerous and plentiful than before.²⁷¹ This same Saint Malachy also gave fish to a river sterile for two years. "'Precipite, . . . laxari retia in nomine Domini'. Factum est; et capti sunt salmones. xij."²⁷² Likewise, the river Synna, "quod est fructiferum ualde in diuersis piscibus, regiones Neill, id est Midhi, et provinciam Connactorum diuidit", was made productive through the prayers of Ciáran of Cluain.²⁷³ Saint Nonnica saw to it that fish were always abundant along the coast of Kemene "' . . . et vicini maris piscium captura assidua, abundantur administraret vitæ necessaria".²⁷⁴ The rocks and stones

²⁶⁸ O'Donnell, Manus, *Betha Colaim Chille* 187.

²⁶⁹ *Ériu* 5.91 (from *Stowe Ms.*, tr. by Lucius Gwynn).

²⁷⁰ *CS* 254.

²⁷¹ *CS* 613f.

²⁷² *Ibid.* 614f.

²⁷³ *VSH* 1.211.

²⁷⁴ *Boll* 1 Junii 402.

on the north of Ossaroe "abased themselves" that fish might come free from the ocean to the river and vice versa. "And these dumb things [rocks and stones] did obeisance". There is found the best fishing in Erin, through the power of Columcille.²⁷⁵ Again the river Slicech is fruitful all the year round through the blessing of Saint Patrick, "and he blessed the river, so that the Slicech is the milch-cow of the rivers of Ireland, for in it fish is caught in every quarter of the year".²⁷⁶ Patrick also left two salmon alive in the well at Achad Fobuir" and they will abide (there) forever.²⁷⁷ Two fish are forever left intact by the power of Saint Neot.²⁷⁸ "Cumque vno sublato semper duo illibati permansissent, in crastino diuina virtute pisciculorum numerus reperiebatur prefatus."

Parallel with this is the blessing or cursing of waters in accordance with the generous or churlish behavior of fishermen or others towards saints who accost them for gifts of fish. Three of these stories are told of Saint Patrick. The fishermen on the river Dub refused to give him of their catch. Patrick cursed the river and passed on his way. Some little boys on the river Drobéss gave the saint fish, and for this he blessed the waters of the river, "And little boys take fish there still".²⁷⁹ The saint also cursed the streams of the Déisi because books drowned in them and the fishermen had given him a refusal. The northern half of the river Erne of Coirbre was rendered barren of fish because the king had expelled Patrick from his territory, but the share of Conall, the half to the south, would be fruitful always. When Muirguin, a king descended from the ungenerous Coirbre, gave his part, the northern, to Columcille, it was rendered fruitful again.²⁸⁰ Other saints curse rivers because of the lack of generosity of their fishermen. Saint Brendan²⁸¹ made sterile a river because his request for fish had been denied, and

²⁷⁵ O'Donnell Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 135.

²⁷⁶ *Trip* 143.

²⁷⁷ *Trip* 113.

²⁷⁸ *Capg* 2.214.

²⁷⁹ *Trip* 147; Joecelyn 39; *LS* 156.

²⁸⁰ *Trip* 149.

²⁸¹ *VSH* 1.140.

here Saint Enda²⁸² pronounced this penalty on fishermen who had denied him "In hoc portu, ubi elymosinam seruis Dei dene-gastis pisces de cetero non capientur". One boy moved by the spirit of God gave the saint of his catch. "Vnum habeo piscem, quem mihi Deus ministrauerat, et tibi illum concedo." Because of this "stagna Orbsen" where the boy was born should have full and plenty of fish henceforth.

In one story in which a gift of fish is asked, it is a saint who, while he does not actually refuse, still with impish humor finds miraculous means to express his disapproval of the petitioners and to rebuke their later conduct. The peculiar interest of the story is such that a somewhat parallel story is appended because it has the same special element of interest. In both cases, those who ask are mimes (the Latin words used in the first story are 'mimes' and 'histrionibus'), evidently the wandering players, joculatores, who gave vaudeville performances, singing, dancing, juggling, conjuring, exhibiting trained animals, whose performance was an inheritance by the Middle Ages from classical times. Strolling players were then, as later, frowned upon, reprobated as immoral vagabonds. In the first story a troupe of mimes asked food of Saint Fintán.²⁸³ They enforced their request by pointing out that the river was conveniently near, "'Aqua est propinqua tibi; et si vir sanctus, ut diceris, esses, facile quod nos petimus a te habebimus?' Tunc dixit Fintanus: 'Deo quidem non est difficilior piscem dare quam aquam ipsam'; et vocatis ad se discipulis, misit eos ad puteum, qui quam fluuius vicinior eis fuerat, et cum aquis inde magnum piscem in suo vasse attulerunt. Piscis autem cum exossari inciperet, nullo ferro potuit secari. Inde mimi dixerunt: 'Quamvis piscis noster durus est, non tamen a nobis hic derelinquetur.' Et abeuntes, secum piscem portabant.'" This impudent attempt to express their resentment was not to pass unrebuked. An eagle snatched the fish from them, bore it to a tree above the well, and dropped it in the water from which it had been taken.

In the second story, both parties in the matter were penalized, those who refused for lack of charity, and finally the mimes

²⁸² *Boll* 3 Mar. 271; *V S H* 2.73.

²⁸³ *C S* 232f.

also, just because they were naturally bad, apparently, and had pushed in where they did not belong. Lonán, King of Húi Figeinte, was preparing a feast for Patrick, and Mantán, a deacon of Patrick's household, was helping in its preparation; a troop of mimes turned up and asked for food. Lonán and Mantán indignantly declared that it "should not be buffoons who should first break into the feast". Patrick rebuked them, saying that "neither king nor bishop should spring from Lonán and that Mantán's cloister should not be high on earth". A youth named Nessán arrived, carrying on his back a wether, a *tanag* (some kind of hard cheese), and three curd-cheeses, as gifts for Patrick. The saint gave them to the mimes, but while they were eating the wether, behold—no doubt because of their earlier arrogance and despite Patrick's kindly behavior—the earth opened and swallowed them up and "they went to the depth of hell, and the cheeses still remain turned into stones". Nessán received Patrick's blessing, and was ordained deacon.²⁸⁴

Another stock motive is the miraculous provision of fish when food is lacking in the wilderness, or when some other need must be met, such as the arrival, expected or unexpected, of guests. Jonas tells us how God twice thus provided for Saint Columbanus. On one occasion, he sent his followers to the river, who found five fishes left by fishermen, of which they brought back the three that were still living. Though the trip to the river was long and arduous, Columbanus sternly bade them go back for the two that were dead, because all five had been provided by God and it was not fitting to pick and choose of his merciful provision.²⁸⁵ Again Columbanus directed his disciple Gall (later the great Saint Gall) to go to the river Brusch for fish. Gall went to the Orguin instead. Great numbers of fish approached the net, but turned and swam away as if stopped by a wall. On his return, Columbanus reproved him for his disobedience in going to the wrong river. He then went to the river Brusch as at first commanded, and the net placed in the river caught so

²⁸⁴ *LS* 163.

²⁸⁵ Migne, P. L. 87 Jonas' "Life of Columbanus," *Translations and Reprints* 2 No. 7 11f.

many fish the brothers could scarcely draw it in.²⁸⁶ So also Saint Gall was providentially supplied in the wilderness. He and his companion had travelled all day, when the deacon said to him, "Father, the hour for refection is at hand". They had nothing to eat but bread and water. Coming to a river, they saw a cave, with water descending in a great whirlpool in which were many fish. They cast their nets and caught them. The brother cooked the fish, and both partook of their evening repast.²⁸⁷ Saint Gall, too, it may be added, had a strange experience while fishing in Lake Constance by night. He heard the demon of the mountain calling upon the demon of the lake for help to rid themselves of Columbanus and his monks. Gall made the sign of the cross and bade the demons begone in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Then he hurried back to the Abbot Columbanus and related to him what had happened. Columbanus gathered the monks and chanted psalms, whereupon the voices of the demons could be heard as they passed from mountain and lake.²⁸⁸

Columcille and his monks came to seek the hospitality of Saint Comgall at Benchor. The power of the Lord sent a great crowd of fishes to congregate on the shore before Comgall's monastery. The guests of Comgall were fully satisfied.²⁸⁹ Columcille was often miraculously supplied with fish, for Manus O'Donnell remarks that "not only did God put dumb beasts of the forests in obedience to Columcille, but that He put the fishes of the sea under obedience to him in likewise".²⁹⁰

Adamnán relates the following. When some companions who were "keen fishermen" had taken five fishes in a net "in the fruitful river Sale", the saint said to them: "Cast your net a second time into the river, and immediately you will find a great fish, which the Lord hath prepared for me." They did so, and drew forth a salmon of wondrous size.²⁹¹ At another time near

²⁸⁶ Migne, P. L. 87; Jonas' "Life of Columbanus," *Translations and Reprints* 2 No. 7 12.

²⁸⁷ Migne, P. L. 114; Walafrid Strabo, *Life of Saint Gall* 987.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 985.

²⁸⁹ *Boll* 1 Junii 585; *V S H* 2,16.

²⁹⁰ *Betha Colaim Chille* 327.

²⁹¹ Cf. O'Donnell, Manus, *Betha Colaim Chille* 327.

Lough Ce he stopped his companions who wanted to go fishing, saying: "today and tomorrow not a fish will be found in the river; I will send you on the third day, and you will find two great river salmon caught in the net". So after two days, casting the net, they drew to land two fish of most unusual size from the river Boyne.²⁹²

When Saint Finnián signed Ruadán's wonderful tree that distilled sustenance for the brethren, the cellarer asked Ruadán what the brethren and their guests should eat that night. Ruadán answered, "Refectionem nobis Deus omnipotens mittet", and "cellarius ipse cum ministris de riuulo monasterii aquam hauriens, piscis mire magnitudinis per lapidem prorupit, qui habitatoribus illius loci illa nocte suffecit, cuius uestigium in lapide usque hodie manet".²⁹³ Saint Naile and his clerics came to Columcille at "fresh featured Inber Naile", which Columcille appointed as the young saint's place of abode. Naile worked a miracle that the saint's following and his own might eat,²⁹⁴

"Full of fish was the whole strand"

Full, too, of red wheat, the sand having been changed
into flour."

When Enda and his disciples came to Lemhchaille, God sent them a wonderful fish of great size. "Ex quo pisce pauti Cunctipotens centum et quinquaginta qui erant cum sancto Endeo."²⁹⁵ As a reward of obedience, Moling's clerics got a salmon in every net, "Cast your net into the haven the streamports of the Barrow (a river in Leinster)". Three times they complied and a salmon was caught in every net.²⁹⁶ When Bairre came, angel-guided, to his own district he found himself a cave and there was "a fair pool beside it, from which was brought every night

²⁹² Adamn 71.

²⁹³ *V S H* 2.245.

²⁹⁴ O'Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 145; Plummer, *Misc. Hag. Hib.* 129.

²⁹⁵ *V S H* 2.70.

²⁹⁶ *RC* 27.273 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

to Bairre a salmon caught in a net of a single mesh''.²⁹⁷ The duke offered Mochuta and his train the woods and fishes in the river as gifts.²⁹⁸ Ciarán of Saighir and Germanus once went to stand in a cold stream, a frequent penance. The stream was too cold for Germanus, and Ciarán made it warm. At the saint's bidding, Germanus stretched out his hand and caught a passing salmon. This was needed for the entertainment of the King of Cashel who was coming on the morrow.²⁹⁹

Still more wonderful is it when fish are obtained miraculously from the dry land. Two stories, differently motivated, are examples of this. When guests were coming to Saint Finan, he had the servant go into the field and catch three fish for him "against their coming". "*Exiit ergo nichil esitans minister in verbo senioris; et de agro sine aqua tres pisces detulit, sicut dixit Finanus.*"³⁰⁰ The sister of Saint Patrick, Lupita, lived in the same house with Bishop Mél, after the manner of the "consortia" in the early days of the Church when saints and women under vows might live in the same dwelling. Gossip arose, as gossip will ever arise. Bishop Mél, wishing to prove his innocence by token rather than by oath, took the plough, and many and large fishes he ploughed up out of the dry land, "angling in furrows whereon rain had poured". Lupita, for her part, carried hot coals in the bosom of her habit and neither she nor the habit was burned! This was the end, according to Jocelyn, of religious men and women living under the same roof; after this they had separate dwellings.³⁰¹

One small story tells of the manner in which fish was prepared for refection. Comgall blessed the hand of a brother and bade him, "*Vade, frater, in officina fabri, et fac nobis craticulam ad assandos pisces*". Then the brother "*obediens, quasi a puericia hanc artem didicisset, fecit in vno die craticulam optimam, et alia utensilia*".³⁰²

²⁹⁷ *BN nE* 2.16.

²⁹⁸ *VSH* 1.195f.

²⁹⁹ *VSH* 1.229; *BN nE* 2.105, 118.

³⁰⁰ *CS* 318.

³⁰¹ *Trip* 89f; Jocelyn 144f.

³⁰² *VSH* 2.15.

The salmon, as has been said, is the only fish to be often spoken of by name, a fact naturally incident to its size and superlative qualities.³⁰³ To find the salmon given its proper glory, one must go, of course, to secular literature and recall "Connla's Well", the Irish "Helicon", where grew the "Nine Mystical Hazel Trees", which annually bloomed and fruited simultaneously with nuts of the richest crimson color, teeming with knowledge of all that was refined in literature, art, poetry. As soon as they were produced they fell into the well, making shining red bubbles. Eating them produced brilliant red spots on the bellies of the salmon, and, wonderful to relate, to catch and eat such a salmon obviated long study! The fish was supposed to be full of knowledge, which was transferred to those who ate it, hence the salmon was called "The Salmon of Knowledge". One remembers further, and with joy, the story of Finn's boyhood told so delightfully by James Stephens,³⁰⁴ where the little fellow eats of the Salmon of Knowledge before setting off to seek his fortune in the world. The well of Connla, too, is responsible for all the rivers of Ireland, so legend says, for the Lady Sinánn wished to drink of the well. The waters, however, rebelled and rose up, making the River Shannon, and carrying the lady's dead body with them. After this, the well was dry forever, but the Shannon falls into a succession of lakes, interspersing Ireland, seven secret streams of knowledge from Connla's sacred fountain.³⁰⁵ In "The Wanderings of Columcille's Clerics"³⁰⁶ one reads of the Isle of the Giant Salmon,

³⁰³ In the *Calendar of Old Records of Dublin* 1.98,219 the writer found an interesting note: "Donation of Salmon: 1284. To Hospital of St. John—the sixteenth fish of the salmon taken in the water of the Liffey. The Mayor and the Commonwealth of Dublin for the benefit of their souls and those of their ancestors and successors" 1.98.

In the *Colloquy* "Rapid Salmons out of Linumhuire, eels of the noble Shannon . . . otters out of the hidden places" are noted as among the food of the Fianna—*Silva Gad* 2.119 (from the *Book of Lismore*). Also, an interesting bit of social background: "Fish are not to be eviscerated in the fish-markets, but on the banks at the water-side." 1.219 *Calendar*, cited above.

³⁰⁴ *Irish Fairy Tales* 34f.

³⁰⁵ O'Curry, Eugene: *Manners and Customs*, 144f; The origin of the Shannon is accounted for in an extremely amusing story which Douglas Hyde got from old Pronsias O'Connor in the almshouse at Athlone. See *Legends of Saints and Sinners* 258. The story is entirely secular.

³⁰⁶ O'Donnell, Manus, *Betha Colaim Chille* 387.

where "as big as a year-old calf [was] every white, purple-spotted salmon leaping up against the weir" of "pure silver".

The only fish beside the salmon to be called by name is the eel, and the story, as Plummer³⁰⁷ has pointed out, seems plainly an echo of the episode of the *Táin* in which Morrigu, taking an eel's form, seeks to entangle Cuchulain's feet in the stream. It seems that a criminous clerk had tried to injure the virtue of one of the virgins of Samthanne's monastery. He was duly punished. For when "rium quendam transire inciperet, ex-crescens aqua, usque ad cingulum sibi peruenit; ac tunc mire magnitudinis ang[u]illa, lumbos eius mordens, eum fortiter circumcingit. Quo facto uehementer ille perterritus, ad uirginem Dei reuersus, genua flexit ueniamque petiit. Qua data de lumbis eius anguilla statim cecidit".³⁰⁸ Mention is made in the *Colloquy* of eels as food of the Fianna, "eels of the noble Shannon".³⁰⁹

Stories mentioning the salmon have been given above. In two others, a favorite motive in hagiographic literature appears—that of the key lost or tossed in the sea to reappear miraculously in a fish caught at a later time. Saint Macreiche, wishing to bind himself forever to a life of asceticism, had his disciple Mainchen bind his feet with fetters to his cell, and then drop the key "in the mouth of the sea", vowing never to leave his island cell until the same key should come to loose his fetters. The great missionary Saint Ailbe came past on his way to Aran, probably to visit Saint Enda's great school, whose students are said to have numbered 3,000. Ailbe desired very much to have MacCreiche go with him, but the saint told him of his promise. Ailbe bided his time and, fetching water a while after, saw a salmon which he brought home and dressed. Behold, the key was found inside the salmon! MacCreiche knelt then to Ailbe, and went with him to Aran.³¹⁰ So likewise the key was restored to a youth, once wayward but become penitent, whom Saint

³⁰⁷ *V S H* 1.clxxxvii.

³⁰⁸ *V S H* 2.256; cf. the amusing giant eel story, entirely secular in character, in Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths* 2.379.

³⁰⁹ *Silva Gad* 2.119 (from the *Book of Lismore*).

³¹⁰ *Misc. Hag. Hib* 55f.

Cainnech had restored to life after a fall from a horse. In this instance the key was thrown into the sea about Britain. The penitent after seven years was to go to a certain place in Ireland, where he would find the key, and there remain. Going to Ireland, as he was bidden, he asked the fishermen of the Liffey for fish, and in a great fish he found the key to his fetters.³¹¹ The helpfulness of salmon in this regard may serve to introduce Saint Moling's treasure-trove discovered in cleaning a salmon. Saint Moling, "he that in three leaps cleared Luachair Deghaid, when the spectres were after him, wherefore he was called of Luachair, though his original name was Tairshell", sent fishermen one night to catch fish, and their nets caught a great salmon. "When he was split", they found inside of him an ingot of gold, which Moling made into three parts, one-third to the poor, one-third for ornamenting shrines, one-third for providing labor.³¹² Ninnid of the Pure Hand, he who was to give Saint Brigit Viaticum, "fecit circa eam aeream arctum manicam, cum sera et clavi, ne illa corpus suum tangeret, neque de aliquo immundo tangeretur". On going into Britain, Ninnid threw the key of the hand "in pelagus, ne semper aperiretur". As Saint Brigit was dying, winds wafted Ninnid's ship to Hibernia and a great fish appeared "et inventa est in eo cum esset partibus, clavis serae manus S. Ninnidii". Forthwith the "pure-handed" priest gave viaticum to Saint Brigit even as she had foretold when guarding her sheep on the hills of Kildare.³¹³

Two remaining stories of salmon are of peculiar interest as affording striking examples of pagan myth fused with or connected with Christian legend. It may be remembered that in the *Voyage of Bran* after two days at sea, Bran met a being approaching him in a chariot across the surface of the sea. It was Lir, son of the sea, father of the Irish Neptune, who explained to Bran that for him the sea was a beautiful flowery plain.³¹⁴ Scóthine of Tech-Scothíni in Sliab Mairge came by

³¹¹ *V S H* 1.157f.

³¹² *R C* 27.285 (from *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* and *Brussels Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes); *Silva Gad* 2.510 (Notes from *LL* 331 5).

³¹³ *Boll* 1 Feb. 168.

³¹⁴ *Voyage of Bran*, tr. by Kuno Meyer 16f.

his name in an extraordinary way. For the shortening of the journey which he used to take, that is, to go to Rome in one day and come from it in another, he used to walk upon the sea. One day he met Bairre of Cork—and “Barre in a vessel”. “What is the cause of thy walking on the sea?” asked Barre. “It is not the sea at all, but a plain full of clover blossoms,” replied Scóthin, and his hand touched a flower, and he threw it to Barre in the ship and said, “What is the cause of a vessel swimming on a plain?” At that, Barre stretched out his hand and took a salmon thereout, and flung it to Scóthin—“so from that flower (Scoth) he is named Scóthin”.³¹⁵

The other story, most extraordinary of all, is the weird legend of Lábán the sea-maid.³¹⁶ Lábán, we are told, was the daughter of Eochaid, after whom Lough Eatach was named. She alone survived when he and his family were drowned in the overflowing of Lough Neagh, and was preserved in a *grianan*, or boudoir, under the lough for a full year,—“she loved the estuary rather than a house.” At her desire she was changed into a salmon: “O my Lord, I wish I were a salmon that I might swim with the others through the clear green sea!” Her lap-dog was changed into an otter, and for three hundred years she lived under the sea. Now it chanced that Saint Comgall of Bangor dispatched Beoan to Rome with a message to Saint Gregory to take orders and rule. While at sea Beoan heard beneath his curragh the sound of angels singing. Lábán addressed the mystified voyagers. She would proceed to meet Beoan that day twelve month at Inbher-Ollarbha (Larne), whither Comgall with the saints of Dal Riada were intending to resort. So it happened. Nets were set and Lábán was caught in the net of Fergus of Miluic. Lábán’s lap-dog was killed by a “dark-visaged fierce hero”, which grieved the sea-maiden, who told him that he should be overcome by his enemies unless he did penance. The right to Lábán was disputed by Beoan for

³¹⁵ *Fél* 2 41; *Mart. Donegal* 5.

³¹⁶ *Lebar na Huidre* 31; *F M I* (*Annals of Ulster*, anno 571, tr. by William Hennessy 63; Reeves: *Antiquities of Down and Connor*, 377f; *Kilk. Archaeolog. Journ.* 1870-1, both cited by Joyce, P. W. *Social Hist.* 2.462; also his *Old Celtic Romances*, tr. 101f. Cf. Brendan’s meeting with a sea-maiden, *LS* 255; *BN nE* 2.61.

her promise to him, by Comgall in whose territory she was caught, and by Fergus in whose net she was taken. Then they prayed for a heavenly decision. The next day two wild oxen came down from Carn-Airend, and on being yoked to a chariot on which she was placed, drew her to Teach-Dabeoc, where she was baptized by Comgall, with the name of "Muirgen", that is, "born of the sea", or "Muirgeilt", that is, "traverser of the sea". Oengus in his *Calendar*³¹⁷ places here among the saints for January 27, "My Lord loved Muirgein, a wondrous birth with victories". O'Cleary's *Irish Calendar*³¹⁸ dates her feast December 18. Could a more strange admixture be imagined of Christian and heathen elements? But what a romantic story it makes! One recalls the converse story of the lovely maiden in the *Kalevala* saved by being changed into a salmon.

The demons changed into fish by Columcille might belong rather to the chapter on fabulous animals below, but possibly should be told here. The fog fled before the javelin with which Columcille was driving away demons from Lenglenn. Then the holy man blessed the stream, and venom and enchantment departed. An angel brought a great stone, and cast it at the demons, and Columcille's bell, Dub Dreabsech, bade demons go into the sea through the rock. They obeyed, taking the form of fish that are blind of an eye and red, so that "no fisherman will do aught but cast them into the sea again".³¹⁹

If there were only space, it would be possible to add a number of fascinating stories from popular tradition dealing with fishes. It may be permitted, as an Irish saint is concerned, to refer to one story, current in Tyree and Iona, which tells how Columcille caused the wry mouth of the flounder.³²⁰ The holy man one day met a shoal of flounders—how the reader is left to surmise as he is left to do so often in the legends. "Is this a removal, flounder?" inquired Columcille. "Yes, it is, Columbkil, crooked legs," pertly answered the fish. "If I have crooked legs, may you have a crooked mouth," came the malediction,

³¹⁷ *Féliz* 38.

³¹⁸ *Mart. Donegal* 29.

³¹⁹ O'Donnell, *Manus: Betha Colaim Chille* 131.

³²⁰ Campbell, J. G., *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, 223.

and to this day the flounder has a wry mouth! This is rather illuminating information about the personal comeliness of Columcille, for all the legends speak of his magnificent physique, his imposing appearance! In Sutherland tradition, it may be added, the flounder's mouth rose from his ugly trick of making faces at the rock-cod, a judgment on the flounder which children who love making faces would do well to remember.

Space must be found in conclusion for the following most astonishing quotation from Giraldus, in which it may be seen how saints assisted the processes of nature by aiding the salmon to ascend a cataract: "Praeterea fluvius iste nativam quandam rupem transfluit et transeurrit, ubi cum impetu magno ab alto ut assolet ad ima descendit. In summitate rupis istius est modica quaedam concavitas, sanctorum virorum manibus olim exsculpta; ad quam salmones abundanti in copia ab imis ad summa, quantum hastae longissimae est altitudo, saltu mirabili transferuntur, et nisi piscis proprietas hoc exigeret miraculoso. Hoc etenim piscium genus saltum appetit ex natura. Unde et a saltu salmo nomen accepit."³²¹

³²¹ *Works*, ed. by Dimock, 5.126.

CHAPTER IV

FABULOUS ANIMALS

No other early lives of saints, probably, surpass those of Celtic peoples, especially the Irish as regards the number, variety, and strangeness of the fabulous animals they contain. All go back ultimately to world-myths — but, brief and bald though the accounts of them may be, the Irish variants seem, as in secular literature, to take on individual picturesqueness and atmosphere.

Though the line of separation may be somewhat obscure, it seems helpful to reserve for separate consideration supernatural creatures Christian in origin or wholly Christianized, as distinguished from the fabulous creatures that are thought of as living in and belonging to the same world as man. Such monsters as are plainly variants of familiar myths may first be taken up, then those not so clearly recognizable, and finally the beautiful visitants from the fairy world which are called in on occasion to do the saints special service.

Most familiar, but not least strange, are the dragon-creatures, which swarm in popular myth from remotest antiquity to the present, from the far eastern ocean to the western, all originally of serpent nature and spawned by the sea, characteristically inhabiting lakes, rivers, seas, water of whatever kind, and almost always, even when in later forms amphibious, or terrestrial, carrying with them some evidence of their watery origin. In Ireland, these dragons are called 'peists', literally 'beasts', which, according to Christian legend, were not driven from Erin by Patrick like the lesser reptiles, but were imprisoned by his order, apparently not always obeyed, in the waters where they lived. Any unnamed monster, especially if within reach of water, may be suspected to be of peist-kind.

There are a number in the *Lives*. In later oral legendry and folk-tales, they are innumerable. As an example, consider briefly the 'Rosualt',¹ who though a 'murrisk', sea-fish, inhabited a plain near Croagh Patrick. In Columcille's time this murrisk had given some notable performances. Its custom was to spew three different ways, three years in succession. First, it would turn up its tail and spew in the water, and all the fishes would die, even currachs and ships be wrecked; second, its tail in the water, it would rear its head, and belch forth some noisome fumes into the air, that all the birds would fall dead; lastly, it would turn shoreward, and spew on the land a pestilential vapour which crept over the country killing men and four-footed animals. Even the Jasconius, whom we shall meet in a moment cannot compare with the Rosualt; the former has only his size, but this truly Irish monster beats him in temperament and variety of accomplishment.

The true peist can be unquestionably identified in several stories, and his biological characters thus gathered enable identification of other peists where the stories are not so explicit in point of descriptive detail. The Irish peist holds quite closely to the generic dragon-form and habit, rather unusually so as to close association with water. Fiery breath, fiery exudations from the body, tusks like a boar's, all appear often—the tail but once or twice, as also flaggy wings, shaggy hair or bristles in place of scaly hide, and in one case, hind-legs that rear the beast high in the air. Still stranger shapes represent cross-bred monsters long forgotten. But if such typical bodily features are kept in mind, one may accurately identify a series of creatures clearly of dragon kind, grading down to others, which are certainly noxious, voracious, and owning water as their familiar element, and so to still others too vaguely limned for the paleontologist to recognize, but presumptively draconic.

Saint Attracta's monster was certainly a peist. It lived at Lagna, and the place where she destroyed it has ever been called Lug na Paiste, 'Hollow of the Beast.' It roared like a lion,

¹ *Silva Gad* 2.480 note 2,527 (from *LL* 169 a); cf. *RC* 1.258, ed. by Whitley Stokes.

gnashed its tusks, sharp as a boar's, bristled its hair, while sparks of fire flew from its horrible, unnaturally-shaped body. Its ears were like a ram's, its eyes enormous, glaring, flashing flame. Attracta signed him with her staff and he fell dead.²

In the life of Ciarán of Cluain it is recorded that Senán expelled a 'venomous beast' from the beautiful isle of Iniscathy where he lived.³ When the angels and Senán went to seek the monster, "its hair stood up upon it, and its rough bristles. Longer was its body than Inis na h-Urclaide ('Isle of the Great Trench'). A horse's mane had it; an eye gleaming flaming in its head, and it keen, savage, froward, angry, edged, crimson, bloody, cruel, bounding. Anyone would think that its eye would go through him when it looked upon him. Two very hideous, very thick feet under it; behind it a mane. Nails of iron on it used to strike showers of fire out of the rocks of stone wherever it went across them. A fiery breath it had which burnt like embers. A belly it had like the bellows of a furnace. A whale's tail upon it behind. Iron, rending claws upon it, which used to lay bare the surface of the ground on the path they came behind the monster. Equally did it traverse sea and land when it so desired. Then the sea boiled from the greatness of its heat and from its virulence, when it entered it. No boats could catch it, neither from that day to this has any one escaped from it who could tell tidings of it." Even though it came so near Senán that its "entrails were clearly seen over the maw," Senán in the name of the Holy Trinity banished it from the island.

Saint Abbán had a natural bent for meeting with and tactfully disposing of monsters, though the number is plainly enlarged by duplication in one case of the same story. One of two duplicates⁴ tells how the King of Padua besought him to deal with venomous monsters in a lake, which were ravaging the country. Abbán went willingly, and the whole court with him. Behold, as he approached the lake, the monsters came to meet him, made obeisance, and licked his feet. He assigned them a small corner

² *Boll* 2 Feb. 298.

³ *Boll* 1 Mar 773; *VSH* 1.208. In the *Book of Lismore* this beast is graphically described, 213f.

⁴ *Boll* 12 Oct. 280; *CS* 515f; *VSH* 1.13; *BN nE* 2.5.

of the lake, there to live on fish and lake-water and harm no one. To prove their obedience, they show themselves to this day every seventh year. This motive of the seven-year period is recurrent in dragon-tales. It will reappear below, and it may be remembered that one of Bevis of Hampton's dragons, of the same breed as Saint George's, was despatched to the bed of the Tiber, there showing himself every seven years and raising a frightful stench.

Saint Malo was, to be sure, a Welshman, but it was while he was with Saint Brendan that according to one version of the voyage,⁵ he rendered harmless a great sea-serpent, evidently a dragon, for it was on an island. Malo told the crew, "Nolite illa parte venire: quia serpens maximus ante vos est." When the serpent heard their voice, "per totam insulam auditus est sibilus eius." He devoured three boys before their eyes. Malo made the sign of the cross and extended his staff above the dragon's neck, and bade him be gone and to harm nobody henceforth. Where the saint's baculum struck the earth, a fountain of purest water burst forth.

A story not in the *Lives* and having but slight connection with the saints, cannot be omitted because of its interest.⁶ Saint Kevin is supposed to have prophesied that when Brian Boru kept his court, Cean Coradh, in 1001, a knight of his court should slay the peist, that "hell-born monster" whose "shape has never crossed human eye in any other life-bearing creature." Brian sent his warriors, Ethné, the princess, coming with them to see the combat. Cathal of Brian's court slew the monster, so gigantic and terrible that the air "touched by its wings", was agitated even to the rath of the King, the sound of it being "like the uncurling of some mighty piece of machinery." Other warriors of the expedition declared there should be a church erected on the spot to commemorate the event. A dispute arose as to the site of the proposed building. How long it would have been prolonged no one knows, but just at this moment, there flew above them a drake and a duck, alighting on an eminence

⁵ *Capg* 2.152.

⁶ Whitney, Harley (Patrick Kennedy); *Legends of Mount Leinster*, 35f.

above Glasnach, the drake on one side of the "brawling stream", his mate on the other. The decision was made! The church of Temple-shanbo was erected there and the churchyard kept on one side for the burial of men, the other for women! A certain Saint MacCreiche⁷ or MacCridhe, possibly Saint Macretius (August 11th), destroyed the Crom Crumh Chomnaill, a creature of the Magog kind, by a fiery bolt from heaven, but more to our purpose is his conflict with the peist that dwelt in the weir of Cell Lubulaig. This peist is singularly attractive in that "his hind-legs were higher than a bushy, tall-topped, eminent tree in a bell-tower set on a hill". Balls of fire flew from his mouth as the saint's staff touched him. He dashed into the weir, but at once rose again, whereupon the royal company, assembled to see the saint exercise his power, laughed the saint to scorn. Vainly looking about for something to hurl at the beast, he seized the covering of his tonsure "a grey cloth like a skull cap", threw it at the monster, which curled beneath it and sank "never to rise again till the break of doom and of life".

The most notable of Saint Abbán's monsters deserves now a special word.⁸ The story opens, "Eo tempore in illa regione inaudita bestia, et ualde venenosa, et incognita forma, erat; id est cattus magnus ut vitulus anniculus, ignitum capud habens, hanelam igneam, caudam flammeam, ingentes dentes, vngulas longissimas", and its body turned weapons as if made of adamant. Remarkable as this beast is, it would seem to match up possibly with monstrous cats of later folk-lore, the huge cats as large as sheep haunting the tumuli and cairns around Heaps-town in Sligo near Lough Arrow, one even guarding a treasure, with lights at night and smoke ascending; Irusan, the King of Cats; and the mouse-lord Luchtigern in the cave of Dunmore.⁹ Of Irusan, legend¹⁰ tells how the great cat had seized the bard Senchán, who had satirized the cats and mice, and was carrying him to his lair across the Shannon. Saint Ciarán, who was a

⁷ O'Hanlon, *Irish Saints* 8.169 (from Colgan's posthumous papers).

⁸ *V S H* 1.18f; *CS* 522.

⁹ Cf. Wood-Martin: *Elder Faiths* 2.123f; Joyce, *Social History*, 1.460f.

¹⁰ Kennedy, *Fictions of the Irish Celts* 14; cf. Joyce, P. W., *Social History* 2.461.

famous smith, was hammering a long, red-hot bar of iron. Ciarán "set small value on Senchán as a poet", but knowing him a baptized man, hurled the red-hot bar into the cat's body, causing him to die in dire agony. "This gave the bard time for repentance", the story says—but whether for his sins or his poor verses, who may say?

Are these fearsome beasts projections of our ordinary domestic cat who walked by herself out of Egypt, carrying her name with her throughout Europe? Does her later sinister reputation for occult intelligence, diabolism as witch-familiar, huge Grimalkin at witch-Sabbaths, or dismembered to afford this or that potent property or ingredient in unholy ritual or witchbrew, derive in some part from these earlier creatures? One would rather suppose such monsters might be adumbrations of the huge wild-cats of Ireland, strong, fierce, really formidable if attacked. These certainly may have played a part whether in Ireland or elsewhere at some earlier time. The true explanation, however, seems to involve more than Irish or, indeed, Celtic tradition.

If cat-monsters are sought in early Celtic myth, they seem hard to find in any number. There is the enchanting cat who serves as a host in *Maelduin*, there are the three indeterminate cat-creatures from the cave of Cruachan in the *Fled Bricrend* that affrighted Conall Cernach and Laeghaire the Valiant, but not Cuchulain, and there is the cat that killed King Arthur at the Lake of Geneva—or was it Lake Bourget—but fortunately not elsewhere. It is this cat, Capulu, Chapulu, Cath Paluc or Palug that clearly explains strange features of Abbán's cat, if we consult the masterly article of Freymond.¹¹ Freymond, tracing the story of Arthur's conflict, fatal or victorious, with the cat-monster through its variants in French and Middle German, together with the early history of the Cat in Celtic sources, most cleverly deduces from scraps of incidental detail, that the Chapalu was originally a sea-monster, and, after marshalling various forms of the dragon, that it was a dragon. His view met with some hesitation, owing to the fragmentary character of the

¹¹ Freymond, E., "Artus kampf mit dem katzenungetum, Festgabe für Gustav Gröbar, Beiträge zur romanischen philologie, 1899.

evidence, but is indubitably correct. The monster is found in Welsh tradition; a triad¹² tells its origin, how the ancient sow of Dallweir Dalben went burrowing into Cornwall and thence into Wales, with the hand of Coll, her keeper, on her bristles; at Maes Gwenith she dropped wheat and bees, where henceforth was the best wheat, and in Lonwen dropped barley and bees, wherefore the best barley is there, then dropped a wolf-cub and eagle, and thence going to Maedu dropped a kitten; and Coll threw the kitten into the Menai, and she became afterwards the Catte Paluc. *The Red Book of Hergest* tells the story in triads. Coll is one of the three great swineherds of Britain, and we are further told that after he threw the kitten into the sea, the children of Paluc in Mona reared her to their sorrow—she was one of the three scourges of Mona. This motive of the growth of the cat from a cherished kitten to a monster (itself a well-known motive in dragon-tales) appears, as Freymond pointed out, in the version of Brendan in the *Book of Lismore* of the fight between the monster and the whale. An infirm and aged man begs Brendan to save him from a sea-cat on the island, which had grown as big as a young ox or a three-year-old horse; he had brought the cat with him as a pretty little beast when he came on pilgrimage and it had grown to a monster, though as yet it had not harmed man. As they flee the island, the cat pursues them and at Brendan's prayer, the whale rises and rescues them. It is curious how again the cat-theme seems to recur, though in incidental reference, in an episode in which mice-monsters threaten Brendan's company and actually devour one of them.¹³ When the company of the mariner-saint had sailed some time westward towards Aran, "they see the island, great, lofty, remarkable, beautiful". There on the shore were mice ready "in similitudinem cati", to pounce upon and devour them. The terrible fate of the Buffoon is related, he who came last into the vessel and who was chosen to be the first martyr, for after receiving the Body of the Lord, "obediens patri usque ad mortem, perrexit ad bestias. Ad quem, uelut musce famelice ad carnes,

¹² *Ms. Hengurt* 536; Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, 2.459.

¹³ *V S H* 1.137; *L S* 258.

mures accedentes, subito usque ad ossa carnes eius deuorarunt. Et ibidem finem certaminis expectantes, sepelierunt ossa eius ”.

There need be no difficulty in assuming a sea or lake-dwelling cat-monster, for composite dragons, indisputable dragons, crossed with every kind of animal and even human shape, are innumerable from Japan and Corea to the Atlantic. It is to be regretted that Freymond did not happen upon Saint Abbán's cat, for it would have served as a most curiously apt confirmation of his theory. While combining so definitely cat and dragon, it is as unmistakably a water-beast in that, after the saint has called for chains and proceeded to the river Brosnay or Brosnach, the beast, “ignifera et formidabilis” beholding the saint, whose companions flee in terror, “quasi domesticus cattus gaudens in aduentu domini sui, venit ad eum, inclinans se ad pedes eius”, and the saint thereupon seizes him, drags him “ad lacum propinquum, et ibi eum cathenis ligauit”—where like other dragons, he appears every seven years in token of the power that placed him there.¹⁴ Thus he has not only fiery head, tail, ‘anelam’, teeth, claws, with bristles and sting in the *Lismore* version, but also is chained in his lake as his natural abode. Further, there is a very curious point that seems to link this cat with the Cath Palug. In wholly unusual fashion in the *Lives*, and for no reason having any point in the story, it is a swineherd, subulcus, who begs Abbán's aid, “O famule Domini, qui plebem a Deo tibi creditam liberasti a cultura dyaboli, defende eandem a catto dyabolico”. This swineherd seems surely a blundered reminiscence from the story of Coll the Swineherd who dropped the Cath Palug as a kitten into the sea, later to become a scourge to the children of Mona, devouring nine-score warriors a day.

Here, too, belong the references to “the land of cat-heads”, where Columcille's clerics are entertained by a “cleric with a chasuable of white hair (cloth), and the ‘island of dogheads,’ monsters with heads of dogs, manes of horses and bodies of men.”¹⁵

¹⁴ *V S H* 1.19.

¹⁵ O'Donnell, Manus, “The Wanderings of Columcille's Clerics” *Betha Colaim Chille* 389.

Brendan's *Voyage* cannot pretend to rival its lay-brethren, *Mailduin* for example, in the number and fascinating picturesqueness of its *mirabilia*, but it certainly makes a great play with one famous world-myth, the living island, wrongly called whale-island, "petrosa sine herba", the "Aspidochelon", or Asp-Turtle, whose name through scribal confusion in some versions of the Latin *Physiologus* became "Fastitocolon" in the old English *Physiologus*.¹⁶ A strange and fascinating history this dragon-creature has, for draconic it is, carried from the travellers' tales of the Indian Ocean, through oriental and western bestiaries, to appear merged with the Leviathan and Kraken, in the pages of Milton and Lowell. In *Brendan* this "piscis prior omnium natantium in oceano", has the euphonious name 'Jasconius', Latinized form of the Irish *easconn*, 'King of Fishes'. It is a delightful fact that as Cooke has pointed out, there is a clear reminiscence of the first element of his original name 'Asp-turtle' (both asp and turtle it will be noted are reptilian), in Brendan's explanation to his followers that the beast is a fish "et quaerit semper ut suam caudam jungat capito suo, et non potest pre longitudine". Huge and terrifying as the beast might be, the behemoth's behavior, after their first fright, could not have been more obliging, heaving himself up as he did to provide solid footing when needed.

It was Saint Malo who celebrated Mass on Easter on the whale's back. "Now when the Easter was nigh, his family kept saying to Brenainn that he should go on land to celebrate Easter. 'God' saith Brenainn 'is able to give us land in any place that He pleases.' Now after the Easter had come the great sea-beast raised his shoulder on high over the storm and over the wave-voice of the sea, so that it was level, firm land, like a field equally smooth, equally high. And they go forth on that land and there they celebrate Easter, even one day and two nights." The *Book of Lismore* states that "when Easter of every year was at hand the whale would heave up his back, so that it was dry

¹⁶ See the illuminating introduction in A. S. Cook's *Old English Elene, Phoenix and Physiologus* lxiiff; Joseph Dunne, "The Brendan Problem" *Catholic Historical Review* Jan. 1921, and *Brendan* literature in general.

and solid land".¹⁷ The landing upon his back, the sinking when he felt heat, the finding again of a cauldron left at a previous visit, are details of his legend that run far back in the developed form of the original story, which appears, to mention notable instances only, in the Avesta, Talmud, and the famous episode in the story of Sinbad. Doctor Dunne's article, referred to above, notes various later references to the Brendan story. One of special interest here is a poem on the characteristics of Irish saints attributed to Cuimin of Condeire, Bishop of Noemdrum (653), but belonging, as the language shows, to the 12th Century. It cites the rigor of Brendan's rule, and remarks

"Brenainn loved lasting devotion
According to the synod and assembly;
Seven years on the great beast's back he spent,
It was a difficult mode of devotion." ¹⁸

The monsters not described in detail but to be adjudged peists because of their association with water offer some interesting examples. It was no less a person, it seems, than Find Mac-Cumaille who prophesied Coemgen's victory over a monster that had killed men and dogs of the Fiona. The lesser lake in Glendalough was needed for men and cattle and all kinds of sick folk to bathe in and be healed, and Coemgen's prayers drove the monster into the larger lake below where he remained. But the troubles and cares of those who came for comfort and healing in the upper lake passed to the huge beast's pool, and ever and again disturb him sufficiently, so that he lifts himself and turns over to the other side, thus causing the water to rise. "He who sees it does not live a week!" ¹⁹

When Mochua of Balla came to Connaught, Cellach, son of Ragallach, the King, went a-hunting. The deer took its stand on a high cliff in the midst of a lake and none dare go after it, because of the monster in the lake. A man of the King's household, under Mochua's safe-guard, killed the deer after swimming the lake, but, as he came swimming back, the monster "swallowed him as one morsel". The king was angry with Mochua, and

¹⁷ P. 253f.

¹⁸ *LS* 253.

¹⁹ *BN nE* 121.

the "cleric waxed wroth with the monster, so it threw up the warrior every whit whole in the presence of the hosts and never did it hurt anyone afterwards."²⁰

Molua, happening providentially to come by a lake, saw two boys in swimming with a monster near them, "magnitudine navis." "Swim to me," said the Saint; "see who can get here first." The boys struck out, but one looked back and died of fright. Molua by the sign of the cross, restored him to life, and by the same sign made it impossible for the monster to do harm thereafter.²¹

After the murder of Saint Cellach his brother Muirdach came to seek his body. In the lough near by was a raging beast that killed nine of Muirdach's men. He plunged in, could not find her at first, but tracked her down till he found her lying asleep, gorged, on the shore. The hero plunged his sword into her, and she bit the earth and flew into the lough, the weapon still in her. Beneath the surface, Muirdach fought with her, as Beowulf did with Grendel's dam, and though wounded himself, slew her, and took away her head.²²

A story of that most remarkable saint, Barre of Cork, though not in the Latin life, merits admission in illustrations of the tradition.²³ Barre's servant Livin was fishing in his corougheen on a lake in Desmond when he was seized by a peist infecting the lake. Seeing the bottom of the boat upturned, the saint suspected what had happened. The people round about came to the spot with pikes and forks. At Barre's prayer, the monster came bellowing from the lake, following the river-course for a mile and then cast up Livin's dead body at a spot called "Livin's cascade". The monster was killed by the country-folk some fifteen miles further on at the "Inch of the Saints". There was such a multitude with Barre on this occasion that the saint, having forgotten his book from which to read the prayers for the exorcism of the beast, sent a man back for it, and the book was passed from one to another of the folk present until it reached Barre himself—a distance of sixteen miles!

²⁰ *Boll* 1 Jan 48; *LS* 284.

²² *Silva Gad* 2.60 (from *Lebar Brece*).

²¹ *Boll* 1 Aug 345; *VSH* 2.213.

²³ O'Hanlon, *Irish Lives*, 9.559.

We again meet with Abbán in connection with a peculiarly horrible dragon, and one extremely interesting because it was officially determined to be one especially devised by the devil. It will also be noted that, when it came to monsters, Patrick and Ybar could not compare with Abbán. On one occasion for subduing a demon in the form of a monster, Abbán's prayers are more effective than those of Ybar and Patrick. One day the three saints were sailing in a ship on lake Garman, when "apparuit eis monstrum bestiale et incognitum de mari, habens centum capita diuersis formis, ducentos oculos, et totidem aures; et extendit se usque ad nubes, et aquam de labio eminentioris capitis, quod superabat cetera, alte in nubibus eiiciebat; et fecit ingentes fluctus per totum stagnum, ita ut pene mergeretur naui". After Abbán's prayers proved more effectual than Ybar's or Patrick's, following upon his modest withdrawal till a divine voice bade him pray, "illud quasi mortuum apparens", a part of the monster fell in the water, a part on land, and the troubled sea became calm. Here a comment is made on the water of the 'stagnum' "Siue stagnum siue fretum dicitur, salsam aquam continet". Then it is shown that the monster was a diabolic invention, "Mirum dictu, nil inuentum est de corpore monstri diabolici, in aqua, vel in terra, postquam a sanctis capita eius numerata sunt, et intenderunt turpitudinem et terribilitatem ipsius; et in hoc apparet quod dyabolus fuit".²⁴

Brief space must also be found for a delightful tale told by Kennedy²⁵ of a dragon-monster that levied black-mail in Cork. At the suggestion of a Holy Man (the legend does not say whom) the people called a parley with the peist. They told him the countryside was destitute of furnishing another meal, but if he, the monster, would enter a certain cauldron or pot, and sleep until Monday, they would collect his food from all thereabout. The monster got into the "crib", and they closed him in. When Monday came, he roared to be set at liberty, but the trick was theirs—he had agreed until Monday, and Monday in the Celtic is the same word for Doomsday!

²⁴ *Boll* 12 Oct 281; *CS* 518; *FSH* 1.15.

²⁵ *Fictions of the Irish Celts* 15.

Minor examples multiply. Saint Coemgen standing in cold water all night—for centuries a favorite act of mortification—was annoyed by a terrible beast which swam around him. God sent an angel to destroy the beast and warm the water.²⁶ Columcille is associated with monsters a number of times. Dallan Forgaill in his *Praise of Columcille* “saith that Columcill understood . . . the voice of the beasts of the sea”.²⁷ A boy faring over the river to where Columcille was preaching, before he had “been to hear God’s words” was stricken dead by a serpent in the water. The saint restored him by “making the cross with his crozier on his breast”.²⁸ A lad given to a beast to propitiate her was restored by the prayer of Columcille;²⁹ Beia, a monk went a way forbidden by Columcille, and a terrible beast heaved her head above the sea. “And a mountain peak was not larger than she”, but Beia, turning the other way, escaped by Columcille’s power.³⁰ Another beast, belching sparks of fire and killing people was cursed by Columcille’s disciple Macarius, and the monster was changed into a pillar of stone.³¹

Cormac, beloved friend of Columcille, was on a journey in quest of the Island of the Saints, when he saw the sea full of monsters rising on every side of the vessel, “cleaving with their teeth and claws. . . . And they were as big as a rana. And there were no wings on them like birds, nor swam they like fish or creatures of the sea; but they leaped above the water and the boat rose up from the sea with the oars; and their claws and their teeth stuck fast therein”.³² Columcille in Iona watching Cormac in spirit knew his afflictions, and calling together the brethren, they prayed that the south wind, the cause of his trouble might change to the north. So it happened and the voyager was saved.³³ Still another water-monster was driven away by Columcille’s blessing.³⁴ Yet again the holy virgin

²⁶ *Boll* 1 Junii 309; *V S H* 1.243.

²⁷ O’Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 417.

²⁸ *L S* 179.

²⁹ O’Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 197.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 235.

³¹ *Ibid.* 257.

³² *Ibid.* 281.

³³ *Adamn* 99.

³⁴ *Adamn* 78; O’Donnell, Manus: *Betha Colaim Chille* 307.

Samthanne compelled a monster in a neighboring lake to remain peaceful, harming neither man nor cattle.³⁵

In several stories sea-monsters are mentioned without definite indication as to whether they are of dragon-kind. Thus when Saint Déclán drove back the sea,³⁶ the strange beasts left stranded were, one supposes, merely natural creatures from the many strange kinds the sea contains. When Brendan's crew fed for three months on a dead sea-monster,³⁷ one cannot suppose it other than natural. But there is some doubt when the innumerable huge beasts are seen through the clear water while Brendan celebrates Holy Mass and lifts his voice still more loudly to his brethren's ever-increasing fright, for his rebuke to them indicates that the beasts might well be akin to the Old Dragon.³⁸ Also one must feel doubt as to the actual character of the two monsters between which a fight is threatened like that between the dragon-monster and the whale.³⁹ The first monster in fear implores help in the name of Brigit: "'Adiuro te in nomine Brigide, uirginis Hibernensis, ut me dimittas.' Et mox dicto, belua persequens dimisit persequi alteram." Brendan was put out by this appeal through Brigit, and declared that he would not stay at sea longer "until he should know why this miracle was wrought for Brigit rather than every other saint". Later Brendan came to Kildare to know why the monsters "in mare" gave Brigit such honor, beyond other saints. "So when Brenainn reached Brigit, he asked her to confess in what wise she had the love of God. Said Brigit: 'Make thou, O cleric, thy confession first, and I will make mine thereafter.' Said Brenainn: 'From the day I entered devotion, I never went over seven furrows without my mind being on God.' 'Good is the confession,' said Brigit. 'Do thou now, O nun,' saith Brenainn, 'make thy confession.' 'The Son of the Virgin knoweth,' saith Brigit, 'from the hour I set my mind on God, I never took it

³⁵ *V S H* 2.255.

³⁶ *Boll* 5 Julii 600; O'Hanlon: 7.325.

³⁷ *V S H* 1.123f.

³⁸ *V S H* 1.127f; *B N nE* 2.74.

³⁹ *V S H* 1.143, also the Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum* as cited *L S* 333n.

from Him.' 'It seems to us, O nun,' saith Brenainn, 'that the monsters are right, though they give honour to thee beyond us.'"⁴⁰ Yet again another sea-monster in Brendan evidently has borrowed one of the most notable traits of the whale. "Quadam die, cum sic nauigarent, ecce apparuit post illos bellua marina mire magnitudinis, de naribus suis undas expuens, ac mare sicut seua tempestas commouens, que uelocissimo cursu ad eos deuorandos properabat. Et cum, uisa hac terribili marisurbatione, fratres in se turbarentur, sanctus Brandanus in Domino suo semper confidens, ait: 'Nolite expauescere, uos qui estis modice fidei'." He reminded them that Peter walked on the waves, so why should they doubt, "Deus ergo, qui defensor noster est semper, ipse liberabit nos de faucibus huius bestie."⁴¹ Another beast that came to Brendan and his crew was as high as the ship. The saint raised his hands to Heaven and prayed. From the west came a monster belching fire and there ensued between the two beasts a most terrible conflict. "Modo, karissimi, expectate finem huius belli, quod bestia pro nobis contra bestiam pugnat, et nil nobis nocebit." At these words "bestia persequens dirupta est in tres partes coram eis, et altera reuersa est post uictoriam ad locum unde uenerat."⁴² Colmán of Dromore by the efficacy of his prayer caused a water-beast to disgorge a virgin whom he had swallowed while the girl was washing her clothes on the shores of a lake.⁴³ A strangely horrible, and quite anomalous monster, giving all credit to water-creatures, human and partly human in form, horrible or of unearthly beauty, nagas, sirens, mermaids, Be Find, in endless variety, appears in the life of Saint Colmán Ela.⁴⁴ Its tiny size, the vague but ghastly details of its appearance, work strangely on the imagination. Could this be one of the women-folk of the Luchorpan, the dwarf water-dwellers, three of whom helped Fergus to pass under lakes and seas?⁴⁵ "And the name of the monster was Lainn, and this was the nature of it—small pointed gaping

⁴⁰ *L S* 199, 333n, 353n (Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum*).

⁴¹ *V S H* 1.122f.

⁴² *Ibid.* 1.123.

⁴³ *Boll* 2 Junii 27.

⁴⁴ *BN nE* 2.163.

⁴⁵ Macculloch, *Celtic Mythology* 134; *RC* 1.256 (from *Book of Leinster*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

apparition with short bushy hair, unwashed and unkempt all over its head." As the monster came to land, Colmán exclaimed, "If God permit the reeds of the lake to bind thee for me, that I may slay thee". And "the Righteous One" answered him, the reeds binding the monster so that its head was cut off by the king's son.

That well-known fabulous animal the Griffin appears in the Brendan legend.⁴⁶ Despite his size and strength he is slain by one of the angel birds. "Et cum bestia extenderet ungulas ad rapiendum seruos Dei, ecce subito occurrit ei auis, que ante eis portauerat ramum cum fructu; et committens bellum cum griffe, euulsis primo oculis eius, postea occidit eum. Erat enim bestia sic magna sicut bos; ungulos tamen habuit (et) alas sicut aquila."

A like monster probably of similar encyclopedic provenience, but not determinate is the leonine beast slain, apparently at Padua, by that doughty saint with so many large game trophies to his credit, Saint Abbán. Both the regular army and the militia could not prevail against this monster, which is thus described. "Similis quidem forma et fortitudine leoni erat, set rabies eius intolerabilis apparuit, quia provincialis exercitus et rex cum militibus suis sepe contra eum certauerunt, et nichil ei nocere potuerunt, set ab ipso solo superati sunt; et in vniuersis temptacionibus trecentos homines occidit."⁴⁷ Were more details given we might suspect some faded transcript of the famous Mantichora,⁴⁸ with leonine body, human face, three rows of teeth and possibly a scorpion's tail. If possessed of a tail, he would be a dragon, and would belong above.

Another myth of world-wide distribution may be conveniently touched upon here. It concerns not a monster having independent existence, but one supernaturally created from a human being, namely the werwolf. No werwolf appears in the *Lives*,⁴⁹ but the ability exercised voluntarily, or under compulsion, of the people of Ossory to change themselves to wolves is linked with

⁴⁶ *VSH* 1.127; *BNNE* 2.74.

⁴⁷ *Boll* 12 Oct 280; *CS* 515; *VSH* 1.12; *BNNE* 2.5.

⁴⁸ Cf. Freymond, *ut supra*, 349f.

⁴⁹ On lycanthropy in Ireland, see *RC* 2.202; and p. 129 above.

the saints by Giraldus⁵⁰ as due to a curse pronounced, for some reason not given, by Natalis or Naile, patron saint of Kilmanagh. The unknown author of the *Kongs Skuggsjo*, or *Speculum Regale*, an old Norse wonder-book of the 13th century, attributes the curse to Saint Patrick, because the Ossorians, when he attempted to preach to them by a preconcerted arrangement, howled at him, like a pack of wolves.⁵¹ In Giraldus,⁵² the curse required two persons, man and woman, to remain as werwolves for seven years, another pair then taking their place. In this connection, one regrets the frequent interchange of human and animal form in the Celtic myth and Druidic magic did not leave some trace in the *Lives*. At least it seems highly probable that the story of the mage in the forest and the deer that vanished by his hut when the mage received the spear intended for the deer was, in the original form, a story of transformation, the deer being actually struck and changing to the mage with the spear fixed in his head, in the fashion familiar in tales of werwolves.⁵³

"Expleto quoque anno quo se sic occultauit, ecce venatores regis ceruum quendam insequentes, ad habitaculum magi peruenerunt. Magus quoque clamore ac strepidu venatorum commotus, per fenestram respicit, quid tantus tumultus portenderet, scire cupiens. Set nutu Dei accidit, vt uenatur hastam post ceruum aptare cupiens, non ceruum set ipsum magum in frontis uertice uulnerauit. Et sic, fracta ceruice, miserabiliter miser interiit, et ceruus nusquam comparuit."

One other vanishing deer may be recorded at this point. Saint Berach was forewarned by an angel of the coming of a stag. "Tomorrow, in the morning a stag will appear at the door of the monastery, which follow with the packs on his back. When he rests, there do you make your rest "Nam ibi erit sedes tua et memoriale tuum in posterum". The packs were placed on the stag "tanquam super domesticum asinum". The animal at last dropped the bundles and rested a little, then disappeared from the eyes of the men of God.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Top Hib*, tr. by Thomas Wright, 80.

⁵¹ *Ériu* 4.11, tr. by Kuno-Meyer "Irish Mirabilia" in Norse *Speculum Regale*.

⁵² *Works*, ed. Dimock 5.101f.

⁵³ *V S H* 1.84f.

⁵⁴ *Boll* 2 Feb 835f; *V S H* 1.79.

There remain now the stories of the sleek cattle, with special markings, the high-spirited, marvelously colored, richly caparisoned horses, which in Celtic literature in such numbers come from their hidden homes in lake, river or sea. These too like all living creatures must be subject to the Divine bidding to meet a saint's needs. They are by no means forgotten in recent tradition and belief, especially the cattle. Among the innumerable large number of local legends and place-names connected with cattle are a number commemorating wonderful cows from the other world.⁵⁵ One cannot forget the mermaid caught at Bally-cross, who prophesied. Come May Eve, a year after she went back to the sea, three cows, white, red and black, rose from the sea, and three roads were named from the way they went—the White Cow's Road, the Red Cow's Road, the Black Cow's Road. In many lakes and rivers even today have lived magic cows that go from home to home giving milk, till milk sold or spilt ends the giving. In Limerick, a magic cow from the River Dee was driven to a farmer's byre, whose milk, if stripped a hundred times a day, would fill a can—but a red-headed woman spilt the milk while milking for the first time, and the generous creature plunged in the river and was gone forever.

There are only a few stories in which cattle or horses are spoken of as actually coming from beneath the water, but it is probable that in some at least of the many cases in previous chapters, in which cattle or horses miraculously appear to fill a need, they are thought of as supplied from the other world, especially if of singular beauty, or if they suddenly disappear. In other cases, the miracle consists in animals which are wild and unbroken submitting themselves and behaving as if tamed and trained. It is probable that the cows that miraculously appear to give quantities of milk for infant saints are of the other world. The stories seem to establish conclusively that cows with red and white markings are, presumptively, of faery origin from the other world under water. When Moedog gave

⁵⁵ See O'Hanlon, *Irish Saints*; Kennedy, *Fictions of the Irish Celts*; Lady Gregory, *Book of Saints and Wonders*, also *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland*, or in particular Wood-Martin, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland*.

a plough-ox to a leper-woman, he told the troubled ploughman to await the ox the Lord would send. "Subito, mirabile dictu de mari bouem conspiciunt uenientem qui exaltans mugitum ter clamauit, suumque collum apcius in iugum alterius bovis humiliter possuit." Each day the ox came from the sea and returned at the day's end.⁵⁶ In a variant it is a cow that came, remaining till one morning in the red dawn, it returned to the sea.⁵⁷ God sent Enda and his companions in Aran a wonderful cow red-bodied with a white head. Her yield of milk satisfied all the monks. When the mooing of another cow was heard in the island, this wonderful cow after going around three times, as if honoring the Trinity, was submerged in the sweet waters surrounding the island, and was seen no more. "Inde dictum est a nomine illius vacce stagnum na Genanny."⁵⁸ Coemgen's "mira uacca alba" that came morning and evening gave "duo magna uassa de lacte" for the infant's nourishment, "et illi homines nescierunt unde illa venerat, aut quo pergeret die et nocte . . . et post tempus, nemine illorum adhuc sciente, Dei nutu unde venit ipsa rediuit".⁵⁹ In the story already told above of Ciarán of Cluain released, under pledge of ransom Ciarán having sought the aid of his name-sake of Saighir, the two go back together, the younger Ciarán not knowing when he will find the "four bald cows, red-bodied with white heads on them", the king had asked as ransom. It is significant that it was upon the river bank, at a ford that he found the cows awaiting him. Also, when freed by the king the cows vanish, convincing the king fortunately that his treatment of Ciarán was unrighteous.⁶⁰ Ciarán the Elder is really the one deserving the credit according to the version in his Irish life. Brendan was with him when the younger Ciarán appeared, and after bacon had been turned into honey, wine, oil and pottage, it was he, the elder, accompanied by Brendan, who went out and found the cows.⁶¹ In this version

⁵⁶ *V S H* 2.152f, 304.

⁵⁷ *Capg.* 1.20f.

⁵⁸ *V S H* 2.70.

⁵⁹ *Boll* 1 Junii 305; *V S H* 1.235.

⁶⁰ *B N nE* 2.106; cf. *C S* 817.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

the ransom is "sixty white cows with red ears". In another,⁶² it is "seven sleek red calves with white heads."

Similarly there is a living tradition in various parts of Ireland of the beautiful horses of the water-world, not to be spied on curiously without danger, or as bearing the souls of the dead drowned at sea in their death-ride at Whitsuntide.⁶³ Though often mettlesome to deal with in the hero-tales, they are, of course, quite docile with the saints. Their beauty of form, color, trappings, is noted now and again in the *Lives*. Saint Féchin went to ask for a hostage and one of his horses died. A horse from the river-pool came to him and was harnessed to the chariot, and it was tamer and gentler than any other horse. The saint went to the Fair of Carman. Achill would not deliver his hostage until he got the beautiful horse from Féchin. But Féchin would not part with it. In due time, it was permitted to return to the same river-pool with the admonition, "Do thou meet no one and let no one meet thee hence forever."⁶⁴ A robber from Midia stole the King of Fingenus' two horses. The monarch was irate, and persecuted the whole people for the crime of the robbers. Saint Cronán pitied them and tried to make their peace with the king, curing his "præfectus" of the grievous tumor through the mere touch of his girdle. Then the king reverently received Cronán. "Volens tamen sanctus regi satisfacere, ecce duo equi cerulei cum frenis aureis ex stagno Cre recto tramite venerunt ad sanctum Cronanum, steterunt domiti ante eum. Quibus regi presentatis, gavisus est valde."⁶⁵ Cainnech rebuked a wicked king after miraculously coming to the island in Loch Ris. The king despised the rebuke, "Nam statim rex ille superbus sedens vidit currum igneum cum equis igneis, et aurigam in eo terribilem, habentem gladium fulgureum in manu per campum ab oriente venientem trans stagnum in insulam; et percutiens celeriter ante omnes regem, statim mortuus

⁶² *BNnE* 2.110.

⁶³ Ditchfield, P. H.: *Old English Customs* 129; Wood-Martin: *Elder Faiths* 1.377f.

⁶⁴ *RC* 12.347f (*Phillips Ms.* tr. by Whitley Stokes).

⁶⁵ *CS* 549f.

est". The penitent king is brought to life again by the power of Cainnech.⁶⁶

Aed Guaire, King of Connaught, took sanctuary with Saint Ruadán against his enemy Diarmuit. The latter with his warriors came to the monastery and violated sanctuary. Thereupon Ruadán and all the saints of Ireland fasted against the King. Brendan caused "*triginta equi iachincti coloris*" to rise from the sea as tribute for Aed. Diarmuit gave the horses to his men but no sooner had the warriors mounted them, than the horses plunged into the Boyne, carrying their riders with them.⁶⁷

The Irish *Life* ⁶⁸ says that Brendan "took fifty ocean seals and made fifty excellent horses of them". The horses flogged in the sight of all were again turned into seals, when the men had mounted them. The story is exceptionally a clear case of Druidic magic Christianized. In the story of Saint Maedoc's return to Wales, the 'animal magnum' which carried him was perhaps, though of course not necessarily, a sea-horse. Saint Maedoc had had an extended and enjoyable visit with Saint David. One day he said to David: "'Hodie, pater, promisi esse in Hibernia.' Cui senex: 'Et tu hodie eris. Sed et familia tua contra te navigio veniunt; verumtamen non exspectes eos. Firmetur enim fraternitas in celo et in terra inter me et te, et posteros meos et tuos. Et accipe meam benedictionem pergens ad mare: et quodcumque animal occurrerit tibi, ascende illud, et te feret ad Hyberniam.' Accepta igitur benedictione senis, venit ad mare, et animal magnum, quod ibi paratum invenit, ascendit; et sic prospere eodem die in Hyberniam venit."⁶⁹

A similar legend is told of Saint Bairre. He, too, was staying with David of Wales, and fearing to absent himself longer from his brethren, begged Saint David for the horse on which he used to ride that he might get back quickly to Ireland. David agreed, blessed Bairre, who mounted the horse and confidently entered the sea and thus came to Hibernia. There is an interesting sequel: "Equum vero prefatum in seruicio fratrum secum

⁶⁶ *V S H* 1.162.

⁶⁷ *V S H* 2.248f.

⁶⁸ *B N nE* 2.86; *Silva Gad* 1.67f n 43.

⁶⁹ *C S* 476; *V S H* 2.304.

retinuit. Set in memoria miraculi discipuli eius fecerunt equum eneum, qui usque hodie apud Corkagiam manet."⁷⁰ In John of Tynemouth's *Sanctilogium*⁷¹ there is a variant of this story. Bairre wanted to visit the tombs of the Apostles and asked Saint David for a horse, which he rode over the water. "Equus enim tumentes fluctuum cumulos velut planum campum peragebat." On the way he met Saint Brendan "super marinum cetum duram vitam ducens". Seeing Bairre riding his horse over the sea Brendan exclaimed, "Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis!"

In reading these accounts of fabulous animals in the *Lives* there is at first recurrent astonishment that they could find place in serious works written in good faith. In time one perceives that these strange conceptions were not at all exceptional and marvelous, but there was not the least thought of questioning or testing their truth, because for the hagiographer, as for the layman, they were a part of inherited folk-belief, matters of common knowledge, for wholly ingenuous acceptance. Even such an attitude of mind as that of the Irish Augustine, not disbelieving, but seeking to rationalize belief, is quite unusual. Nor at a later time would a hagiographer venture, except very rarely, to omit or to modify, make more credible, some story he might doubt. To realize this implicit belief, and the grip it had on mind and heart, one has only to read the evidence of the retentive grasp the same or similar conceptions still exercise, held openly or in secret, in Ireland even now, or in the recent past. Often, indeed, folk-beliefs and tales of today may directly illustrate, or even interpret, the extraordinary beliefs and practices one marvels at as recorded in the early literature, even in these legends of the saints.

⁷⁰ *V S H* 1.69n (from *Manuscripts R¹ and R²*).

⁷¹ *Capg* 1.259.

CHAPTER V

SUPERNATURAL ANIMALS

As was said above, the distinction between 'fabulous' animals and 'supernatural' is sometimes obscured, but, nevertheless, it is a real one. Fabulous monsters may be thought of as evil, as working the devil's will in injuring or destroying man, their forms may be assumed by the devil and his emissaries, but they dwell in and belong to the same world and in the same way as man. So, also, the horses and cattle of the 'other-world'; they come from and return to the waters, their home; they are not sent from the celestial or infernal regions. On the other hand, the hell-beasts which dwell in the infernal regions and visit the earth only on special errands are supernatural, while the beautiful birds, though originally creatures of the fairy 'other world', have become so wholly merged with Christian tradition as celestial beings, angels, wearing bird-form, that they become supernatural, not of this earth.

The hell-beasts are too familiar in the long line of hell-visions, body-and-soul debates, legends, homilectic literature, and in Christian iconography, to need extended attention. One may, however, question whether anywhere, even in Oriental hells, or the later elaborated hell-visions, they are pictured in greater variety, or with more horrifying detail, than in one or two Irish descriptions. But in the *Lives*, somewhat surprisingly, they are rare and not very striking. Indeed, there are rather few of the conflicts with demons so common in Christian legend everywhere. Here, perhaps, as an example, one may recall how Aed called on Columcille and Ruadán to help him in rescuing from the clutches of "demonēs aeris" the soul of Eigmach who though a "vir pessimus" had helped Aed build a church, how the saints conveyed him to heaven, and how on descending to earth Columcille entrusted his writing styles (as if a fountain-pen) to Ruadán, and being reminded of its loss "que color splendebat auri", had

to send Baithén to fetch it back.¹ Closer to our subject is the story how a demon appeared to Ciarán of Cluain in the form of a most ferocious dog. Confiding in the strength of God, Ciarán exhorted himself, "Ne tradas bestiis animam confitentem tibi; et mox canis mortuus est."² Manus O'Donnell³ states that when Saint Patrick drove the demons from Croagh Patrick some of them took refuge in Senglenn. Columcille rang his bell at them and bade them go into the sea through the rock and "to be in the form of fish forever, and to do not deviltry against any henceforth". The demons obeyed, taking the form of fish, "blind of one eye and red, which no fishermen catching will do aught but cast into the sea again".

The infernal horses of soul-and-body debates, on which demons ride, or lost souls are made to ride, appear in a tale of a demon spurring on to capture the soul of a rich man. Luckily, he had sung three "capitula" of the hymn of Saint Patrick before his death, and the demon had to return humiliated and shorn of his horns.⁴ Saint Cainnech in prayer on an island saw a demon seated on a horse. The saint inquired where he was going so hastily, "Nos festinamus ad contendendam animam vnus diuitis in regione Muscraighi". Cainnech bade, "Venias ad me iterum cum fabulis, ut dicas de illa anima aliquid mihi". When the demon returned to him after the fight, "vidit sanctus Cainnicus eum sine equo, et tristem ualde", for the man had sung three "capitula" of Saint Patrick's hymn before his death and was thereby liberated from demon-hands.

Here a story may be interpolated, a minor detail in which seems to indicate that celestial visitors may ride on horses, as why not, though the fact plays but a small part in the story. It is worth telling if for nothing else than the off-hand ease and address with which Saint Mocomog disposed of the demons evicted from the king.⁵ The king of Cassel, Falbe, had offended Colmán, the friend of Saint Mocomog, who persuaded him to

¹ *V S H* 2.251f.

² *C S* 156.

³ *Betha Colaim Chille* 131.

⁴ *V S H* 1.167f.

⁵ *V S H* 2.175.

come with him to the king. The king would not listen to them. "Non decet te respondere ita summo pontifici, qui est sanctissimus secundum Deum, et nec est minor te secundum nobilitatem huius seculi. De vna enim natione nati estis. Set duo demones dominantur tibi, equitantes super te semper; id est demon elacionis, et alter fornicacionis." The king replied, "Quomodo sciam si ita habitant in me?" Mocoemog answered, "Habebis signa. Vna femina, quam diligis, hac nocte morietur; et duo equites in equis albis cras primo mane ad te uenient, et confabulabuntur tecum; et nescies unde uenient aut quo uadent". Tunc rex perterritus hiis dictis petiuit indulgenciam, et uoluntatem sanctorum pie adimpleuit. Hoc videntes sancti, beatus Mocoemog demoni qui superbiam regi suadebat, ait: 'Fuge, seminator loliorum, de isto loco, et sede super lapidem illum, donec ad te ueniet socius tuus; et loquar ego ibi uobiscum. Deinde alium demonem qui libidinem in rege incendebat, expulsit post socium suum. Qui dixerunt sancto: 'Quo ibimus modo?' Dixit eis sanctus: 'Ite in duos illos rupes, qui sunt in latere aquilonali huius arcis Cassyl, ubi non est accessus hominum, et nemini inde nocebitis usque ad diem iudicii. Et ille locus formidulosus est, et sepe perturbantur animalia que illuc difficile scandunt; et clamor et murmur eorum ibi sepius auditur. Rex autem hec omnia sciens, gratias egit Deo; et sanctos eius honorabiliter remissit ad sua."

When Brandub son of Eochae came with a great army to the shore of Echdromo, there met him a leper to whom the king gave an alms of money. That night in Slane the king fell dangerously ill, and in his illness was brought to the gate of the inferno. "Omnes bestias inferni ore, labiis apertis, uidit inhiare; aliamque bestiam magnam in porta inferni ore aperto uidit, cuius anela ad se regem trahebat." The beast was about to devour the king, when a "handsome cleric" cast into his open mouth the money that had been given to the leper. When the beast had devoured it, it returned to the king. Then the handsome cleric placed his baculum on the head of the beast, "et os eius ignitum clausit", and the king was brought back to earth at the place called Inber Crimthain. His friends went to Aidan that he might bless water

to make the king well. When Brandub a long way off saw Aidan in the chariot, he declared, "Hic est clericus qui me de inferno liberauit." The king fell at the feet of the saint, and implored forgiveness for his sins, and that he might be free from the hell-beast. The saint healed the king, and Brandub gave holy Aidan much land, and "in tota uita sua amici fuerunt inuicem".⁶

Acts of mercy may save souls in danger of being engulfed by hell-beasts. Brandub the King saw in a vision the dun hornless ox he had given a leper put by the cleric Maedoc into the mouth of a hell-beast that would have swallowed the king himself. The story seems to be a variant of the one in the Latin *Lives* where the alms given the leper is money. The Irish life is elaborate and the teller evidently knew the principle of dramatic surprise.⁷

Brendan, it will be remembered went on a hell-journey, and the description of the hell-beasts in the *Book of Lismore*,⁸ while brief, may serve to illustrate how picturesquely the hell-beasts are depicted in homiletic descriptions: "Worms curved, hard, valiant, big-headed, and monsters yellow, white, great-mouthed; lions fierce, greedy; dragons, red, black, brown, demoniac; tigers mighty, treacherous; scorpions blue . . . hawks red and tall; vultures rough, and sharp-beaked; leeches crooked, bone-mouthed." There follows a further description of the abode of the damned, with "cats scratching; hounds rending; dogs hunting; glens, hard and full of reptiles; waters dark, unsweet".

In the *Vision of Adamnan*⁹ one finds the hell-beasts mentioned as adding to the tortures of the lost. "C'est là que des dragons de feu engloutissent chaque âme l'une après l'autre, jusqu'à ce que le dernier dragon la lance dans la gueule du diable." In the terrible valley of fire, "Il y a là huit bêtes, dont les yeux sont comme des globes de feu," and from the middle of the last bridge across this valley, the reprobate fall "dans la gueule des huit bêtes ardentes qui font séjour dans la vallée".

⁶ *V S H* 2.303.

⁷ *B N nE* 2.210; cf. *V S H* 2.150, 303 above.

⁸ *P.* 254f.

⁹ *RC* 30.371 (from *Ms. of Paris*, ed. by J. Vendryes).

Most striking of all descriptions is that contained in a body-and-soul debate in a homily in the *Lebar Brecc*¹⁰ "Then the soul, cursing and being cursed by the body, goes out from it among the demon throngs, and then the body says to the soul: 'Go now into the hands of the demons, and of the devil with his rabble host, where there will be all fullness of every evil and the want of every good thing, in the presence of the folk of the devil, to be tossed on spits, on reddened fiery swords, on poisonous streams of venom, on hard rocks of ice, on lakes stiff and frost-bound, on crooked rugged (?) trees, on big sharp-pointed lances, on horrible awful (?): into the dry, fiery, stinking, terrible, ponderous, watery, dirty, wretched, deadly, destructive, dark, black, smoky, nasty, gloomy, accursed abode, with a multitude of all kinds of beasts torturing the sinful on thick, heavy, frozen, stinking, glowing walls, on heavy streams, beastful lakes, on hollow fiery islands, on keen sharp-pointed iron spears, on dense rough ragged (?) mountains, with grim deadly nails of poison, with cold icy swords, with horrible cry of woe, with pitiable (?) yells and screams, with intolerable howling, with fruitless wailing by the souls of the sinful, who are being tortured, burned, hacked by the black slavish hosts of the gloomy demons, dragging along with them the sinful souls, to the manifold pains of the lowest hell; with red, heavy, fiery chains, with red iron mallets, with heavy edged flails, with long, truly deep streams, with a multitude of various beasts in them, carrying red maces of brass in their hands with which to smite the souls of the sinful.' Thereat the sinful souls raise the vast, intolerable, unbearable, miserable outcry of the oppressed wretched, crying aloud as they are punished and tortured by the devilish throngs, separated forevermore from the face of God, and going with the devils' people into hell without end or limit."

The subject of hell-beasts while interesting is familiar and, moreover, one that quickly defines its limitations. The hell-beasts in origin clearly belong to the tradition of the oriental and medieval hells. It would be too venturesome to question whether possibly the tradition has been specifically enlarged by Irish

¹⁰ *Homily on Hell*, *Trans. Royal Irish Academy*, tr. R. Atkinson, 2.513.

tradition; the suggestion is not inherently impossible and may well be held in mind for examination.

Much more capable of provisional acceptance is the possibility that Irish influence definitely influenced Christian legend, at least to a limited degree, in an unsuspected way. Unsuspected because the element in question is the symbolic use of the bird form in Christian belief as in the representation of the Holy Spirit as a dove, of the angels as winged, the frequent metaphysical use of birds and wings in Holy Scripture, the appearance of a soul released from the body as a bird, white or black, and the like. These are so familiar that we may miss what may be a specific Irish influence giving an individual term or impress to the Christian tradition in some of its developments. There are certain features that are difficult to explain in the symbolic use of birds in Christian legend. Miss Fiske has observed this in her admirable article "Animals in Ecclesiastical Literature,"¹¹ and offers an explanation. Referring to the "animal shapes that are merely masks assumed by spiritual beings good or bad,"¹² for example, the Holy Spirit as a dove, the angels as winged creatures, she questions whether such a "snowy portentous little creature descending from Heaven to breathe into Saint Gregory's ears the wisdom expressed in his books," which is spoken of in the *Old English Martyrology*, may not be referable to a scholastic tenet that one special function of the angels was "the imparting of abstract knowledge from God to Man."¹³ Such an explanation involves, it will be seen, the assumption not only of the existence of such a belief but also its imaginative shaping into the concrete symbol of the bird-like familiar, at a time far earlier than the Scholastics, if it were to find its way into the *Old English Martyrology*. Miss Fiske goes on to say that the angels sometimes reveal themselves under the form of birds other than the dove, again citing the *Martyrology* "swa swa micelra fugla sweg" used of the angels on the house where Saint Wilfrid was, and the angels in bird form frequently gathered about a dead

¹¹ *PMLA* 28.368.

¹² *Ibid.* 374ff.

¹³ Cf. *Capg* 1.256, where the Dove with golden beak flies to Saint David "ad labia eius ludentem et eum docentum."

body or accompanying a soul to Heaven, especially the "puzzlingly blithe nature of the passage in the *Old South Legendary* where the larks alight singing merrily upon the church in which Saint Francis' body is lying", which does not merely illustrate the devotion of animals to the saint, but at once explains itself naturally, if the larks were disguised angels like those in the case of Saint Wilfrid.

Before further discussion of this point, the references in the *Lives* to celestial beings in bird-form may be reviewed. There is, of course, the customary appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove. When Saint Malo was being ordained, "*alba columba super scapulam eius dexteram vsque ad horam qua officium compleretur, ab abstantibus visa est; et officio completo in specie ignis cum magna claritate euanuit.*"¹⁴ Again, when Saint Malachy was saying Holy Mass, a beautiful white Dove flew down from Heaven, and circling about the saint's head, finally rested on the cross above the altar. The story is beautifully told as follows,¹⁵ "*Item alia vice sacrificante illo, orante hora sacrificii, ea quidem sanctitate et puritate cordis [qua] solitus erat, astanti dyacono visa est columba intrare per fenestram in claritate magna. Ea sacerdos perfunditur totus, ea subobscurior basilica tota refulget. Columba vero aliquandiu circumvolitans, tandem residet super crucem ante faciem sacerdotis. Obstupuit dyaconus; et pavens tum pro luminis, tum pro volucris novitate, quam illa sit rara avis in terra, cecidit super faciem suam, et vix palpitans sese erigere ausus est, velquando, officii sui necessitas postulavit. Post missam seorsum conventus a Malachia, sub periculo vite jubetur nullatenus secretum prodere quod vidisset, quoad viveret ipse.*" Much less usual, and more in the spirit of Celtic tradition, is the appearance of the Holy Spirit as a flame and then simply a "bird," and one to which the birds of earth pay tribute. Before the birth of the great Finnian of Clonard, "the tutor of the saints of Ireland", a flame went into the mouth of his mother Telach, and came out again a bright bird; and all the birds and bird-flocks of Mogh's half

¹⁴ *Capg* 2.151, cf. *V S H* 2.69.

¹⁵ *C S* 627.

(the southern half of Ireland) came to the branch on which it sat and stayed with it there. The bird went into Conn's half (the northern half of Ireland) and there sat upon another tree. The birds and bird-flocks of Ireland came to it and kept with it. All of which symbolizes the far-reaching influence of Finnian in the spread of the Gospel of Christ.¹⁶

When Saint Enda and his companions came to Aran, they were desirous of knowing God's choice of an abbot to rule them. They appealed to the Pope who bade them go back to their island and God would give them a sign. The nuncio returned and the holy men gathered in one place, and behold a great and wonderful sign was given them! "Tres enim aues candidas ab oriente ad insulam uolantes uiderunt, quarum una ewangelium Christi portabat, alie uero due casulam preciosi generis deferebant. Euuangelium quoque in sinum sancti Endei posuerunt; casulam uero statuerunt circa eum. Et cum hec omnia complerent, ter uolantes in circuitu insule usque ad cimitharium sanctorum, iterum redierunt."¹⁷

Angels in the form of birds appear to signalize the birth of saints or their future sainthood. Such a portent prophetically attested the sainthood of Féchin "of bright summery life from the delightful borders of Luigne, from the lovable province of Connaught". When the boy was little, Sillan, to whom the land on which Féchin's parents lived belonged, saw a pillar of fire of vast size standing up in the glen. He beheld also a multitude of radiant birds filling the glen from heaven to earth.¹⁸

In the life edited by Plummer,¹⁹ the holy man saw "magnam et candidam auem, et alias quam plurimas aues eam sequentes". Angels in the form of swans appeared above the house where Saint Colum da Tyre da Glas was born, "et vox eorum et ale illorum suavia cantabant carmina, ita ut homines audientes dormirent". One swan-angel said to the other, "Let one of us take care of the boy, and the other go seek a priest to baptize

¹⁶ *L S* 222.

¹⁷ *V S H* 2.71.

¹⁸ *R C* 12.323 (from *Phillips Ms.*, tr. by Whitley Stokes).

¹⁹ *V S H* 2.76.

him". One remained, and the other flew to the holy man named Mumedoc Fetho Duin. The angel took him on his white swan-wings and brought him with great honor to baptize the boy.²⁰

As the celestial visitants may appear as birds white or of radiant beauty, so demonic or evil spirits may appear as black birds. This may be illustrated from the life of Saint Patrick, at the close of his forty days' fast on Croagh Patrick, the beautiful hill overlooking Clew Bay. Towards the close of the forty days, strange black birds gathered over the mountain, so many that they blotted out the vision of the sky. Saint Patrick sang "maledictive psalms" at them but still the evil spirits (for such they were) continued to torment him. He rang his bell at them, but to no avail. Then Saint Patrick flung his bell at them, and a piece broke out of it. Henceforth, since the bell had been given him by Saint Brigid, and because of its fissure, it was called "Saint Brigid's Gapling". Patrick wept so heartily that "his face and his chasuble in front of him were wet". The sorrow of his faithful one prevailed with God, and the demons ceased to worry him, and "no demon came to the land of Erin after that till the end of seven years and seven months and seven days and seven nights". After his fast, Patrick's angel, Victor, came to console the saint", and brought white birds around the Rick and they used to sing sweet melodies to him".²¹ The angel, Victor was Patrick's soul-friend "and the common angel of the Gael", as was Michael of the Jews. In a bird's shape, he was wont to come to Patrick when he was herding the swine of Míluic, and the print of the angel's feet still remains on a stone in a valley in the north of Dalaraida.²²

Somewhat allied to this theme is the appearance of birds in a dream, evidently a vision sent from heaven to affirm and exalt the coming of saints. The exiled Saint Mochuda with his eight-hundred and forty-seven monks came to the realm of the King of Deisi, and Mochuda wondered if this was to be "the place of his resurrection," the place of burial where he would one day

²⁰ *CS* 445.

²¹ *Trip* 115.

²² *Trip* App 415, Notes from Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum*—cf. *RC* 6.264 (from *Liber Hymnorum*, orig. and tr. Whitley Stokes).

hear the angel-call to judgment. Ard Fenian and the king came out to meet the holy man and his clerics. At the same time, the king's wife had a dream or vision of birds circling in the air above the two, one in particular alighting on the shoulder of the king. "It is Mochuda and the flock of birds in his train!", was the King's interpretation of the vision, and he went forward with joy to meet the saint. Lismore was given to Mochuda, and the old Irish life concludes, "an angel prophesied to Mochuda that this was to be the place of his resurrection".²³

Specially noteworthy are the visitations of angels to saints in the form of birds. Angels, here again in the form of swans, often visited Saint Darerca (Monymna, Modwenna) in her cell, "ubi orare solebat atque angelorum colloquium habere solebat". One day seeing the angels, the sister Briga was overcome with fear and fell to the ground. The holy Abbess Darerca said to her: "Tibi enim visionem suorum ministrorum, quam aliis abscondit, manifestare dignatus est. Tempus itaque est ut terram tue nativitatis inhabites, aliisque secundum gratiam tibi datam proficias." And she added: "Oculis quoque, quibus angelos conspexisti, carebis amodo; sed meliores, unde Deum consideres, pro eis habebis."²⁴

Far the most striking and beautiful story is that how Saint Michael under the form of a radiant bird sang to Saint Brendan in the famous cloister at Clonfert.²⁵ On Easter day, "a cleric student" harp in hand made music in the refectory for the monks, who "gave him their blessing". One can see the long monastic table, lined on either side with white-garbed monks,²⁶ their Irish hearts drinking in the music. The cleric-musician wishes that Brenainn were with them that he might "play three strains for him". The monks declare that their father-in-Christ

²³ *V S H* 1.195; *B N n E* 2.289, 297.

²⁴ *U S* 181f.

²⁵ *B N n E* 2.89f; *L S* xiii (from *Rawlinson Ms.*).

²⁶ The garments of the professed monks was of the simplest materials; a plain white surplice was worn over all according to the fashion introduced by Saint Patrick. (See Jocelyn 80f). Cf. "The Legend of Ethne and Fedelim." Adamnán speaks of the "candida tunica" of Saint Columcille; according to Cuimine's *Life of Columcille*, the saint instructed in Hy "candidos monachorum greges."

would not permit the musician thus to entertain him, for it was now seven years since Brenainn had heard "a melody of the melodies of the world". Quaint and truly Irish is the frank disclosure of the fact that Brenainn "has two waxen balls with a thread between them", and whenever he heard a melody of earth, he would put them into his ears. Nothing daunted by the recital of this singular behaviour on the part of the reverend man, the cleric seeks the abbot in the great church. To Brenainn's "Who is this?" the harper replies, "A clerical student come to play the harp for thee". "Play outside," was the not very encouraging answer. Importuned, however, Brenainn opened the door. There follows here a delightfully human touch. Brenainn proceeds, as was his wont, to put the waxen balls in his ears, whereupon the student with charming naivete exclaims, "I do not like to make music for thee unless thou take the wax out of thy ears." Brenainn therewith complied, and after the student had played his "three strains" exclaimed, "A blessing on thee, O student, with thy melody, and heaven to thee for it!"²⁷ From the very human conversation between the two, one learns why the music of earth has no attraction for ears that have once listened to the singing of an Archangel. One morning, Brenainn related, after he had "gone to Christ's body", a great longing for his Lord seized him. In this state, trembling and fearful, he saw perched on the window-sill, "a radiant bird", which came finally to rest on the altar. Because of the "sunny rays about it", the holy man could not look upon it. "Who art thou?" asked the monk. "Michael the Archangel come to commune with thee, to bless thee and to make music for thee from my lord." Bidding the bird welcome, Brenainn remained entranced listening to its song, "from one watch to another". Then "it bade farewell". After telling this experience Brenainn took his stole and placed it over the neck of the student's harp,

²⁷ The "three strains" of the student, more than likely, were the three styles of the Irish musician, the effects of which the old Irish romancers describe with much the same exaggeration as that with which the Greeks described the effects of Orpheus' harp: the *Gen-traige*, inciting to merriment and laughter, dance tunes and other spirited pieces; *Gol-traige*, sorrowful, represented by keens or death-tunes many of which are still preserved; and *Suan-traige*, music producing sleep, lullabies and nurse tunes.

"I give thee my word before God, that after that melody, no melody of the world's melodies seems sweeter to me than this", though he makes haste to add, that it profits him little to hear it after the music of Michael. "Take my blessing, O student, and thou shalt have heaven for thy playing!"²⁸

A later legend not so charming is that of Saint Mochea, referred to by Aengus the Culdee in his *Martyrology*:²⁹ "A sleep without fading of flesh Mochoe of Oendruim slept, of the folk of the congregation in which the sage abode he found none save their great-grandsons. . . . To Mochoe the Beautiful sang the little bird from the skies three strains from the tree-top, fifty years in each strain."³⁰ As is the way with saints, Mochea made use of every minute of his time, and had got his load of wood from the forest ready before the others. Weary, he sat himself down beside a load of wood. Suddenly his ears were ravished by the singing of a beautiful bird on a nearby thorn-bush swaying to the music of his song. Speaking in human voice, the bird commended the saint's diligence. "Who art thou?" inquired Mochea—the same question as Brendan's. "A man of the people of my Lord!" "Why has thou come?" The bird made answer in Michael's phrasing, "To speak to thee from my Lord, and to amuse thee for a while." His throat throbbing with his music, the bird sang on for one hundred and fifty years, which, to the entranced soul of the holy man, seemed but as the passing of a single hour! Even the inanimate wood was quickened by the song, for in all those years, "it withered not". The melody died into silence; Mochea arose, and in his humble way, turned with his load of wood and sought the place where the

²⁸ Compare the mythical story of Cascorach, son of the musician of the Tuatha de Danaans who played for Saint Patrick. Asked the reward the player said: "Heaven for myself and good luck to follow my art." Patrick answered: "I give you heaven and this for your art—it is one of the three arts by which a man can fitly profit to the last in Ireland." Gregory, *Lady, Book of Saints and Wonders* 68f; cf. also *V S H* l.cxxxixf.

²⁹ *Félz* 159.

³⁰ *Mart Donegal* 177; cf. "Life of Saint Mochta" *Footprints of the Irish Saints*, No. 18; W. Lorean O'Byrne, *Kings and Vikings* 41. The same legend told of Monk Felix appears in Longfellow's *Monk and the Bird Song*; Seumas MacManus *Story of the Irish Race*, 199 n6 credits the tale to Finnian of Moville in Down, but believes it to have been first told of one of the earlier Finnians.

church was building. Behold the edifice had long since been finished, long since grown old and moss-grown, the "young men" of its building were long since dead! Mochea alone remained. A stranger among strangers, he related the wonderful story of the singing bird!

As in the case of celestial visitants, so also righteous souls appear as birds, "pure white birds", for example in the *Vision of Adamnán*.³¹ As soon as Elijah preaching to the souls of the just standing under the Tree of Life in Paradise, opened his preaching-book "les âmes des justes viennent vers lui de tous côtes, en forme d'oiseaux blancs. Il leur raconte d'abord les récompenses des justes, les beautés et les délices du royaume du ciel, et ils sont remplis de joie pendant ce temps-là. Il leur raconte les peines et les supplices de l'enfer et les malheurs du jour du jugement, et bien visible est le chagrin qui se peint sur son visage et sur celui d'Enoch; ce sont là les deux chagrins du royaume du ciel. Élie ferme ensuite son livre et les oiseaux poussent d'immenses cris de douleur à ce moment-là, et ils serrent leurs ailes contre leur corps jusqu'à ce qu'en coulent des flots de sang par crainte des peines de l'enfer et du jour du jugement". It is interesting to find this exact incident appearing in the *Book of Lismore*,³² somewhat in the nature of a homily at the end of the *Life of Brenainn*, some monkish scribe's addition, copied from the *Vision* itself.

In a story of great interest, souls appear as doves.³³ The story appears in the *Liber Flavus Fergusiorum* dating 1433. Three students of Antrim "parcoururent le monde, suivant tous les chemins où ils entendaient dire que le Christ avait passé". Death came upon them and Saint Michael permitted them to fulfill their promise to return to their teacher to apprise him of their death. Saint Michael enjoined upon them to warn their teacher that he would be cast into hell-fire for interpolations in the canon, and immorality, and the fact that for seven years

³¹ R C 30.381 (from *Ms. of Paris*, ed. J. Vendryes); found also in *Lebar na Huidre* 31b; *Lebar Brecc* 256a.

³² P. 260.

³³ R C 35.211, *L'Aventure de Maelsuthain* (from the *Ms. of Paris*), ed. J. Vendryes).

he had not chanted the *Altus Prosator*. When the three souls appeared before Maelthusain the teacher, bearing "la forme de trois colombes blanches," he repented and God was pleased with him, and "ses élèves ne le quittèrent pas jusqu'à ce qu'ils partirent tous les quatre vers le ciel". So also Saint Ultan dreamed of the soul of his brother winging its flight to heaven in the form of a dove . . . "plenis sanguine alis. Quo signo arbitror fratrem meum per passionem migrasse ad Dominum".³⁴ And so it came to pass, for "Accidit autem quadam die ut ad germanum suum Ultanum properare volens gratia visitandi cum tribus discipulis suis incideret latrones . . . ubi primum beati Praesulis, caput amputarunt, et discipulos pariter illius in ore gladii percusserunt".

Far the most important reference in relation to the appearance of angels as birds is the episode of the Isle of Birds in the voyage of Brendan. The melodious ever-singing birds on the marvelous trees of the divine Elysium, the fairy "other-world", and the Earthly Paradise, passed into the imrama, and in the voyage of Brendan were given a special Christian interpretation as angels.³⁵

³⁴ *Boll* 1 Mai 121f.

³⁵ In the *Voyage of Húi Corra*, they are given a much cruder interpretation; here also is an island in which wicked souls are torn with the beaks and talons of birds. Cf. W. Y. Evans Wentz, *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, 441. Cf. the description which Laeg gives Cuchulain of the beauty of the other-world to which Manannan's wife had invited him.

"Three waves by the eastern door
Three crystal crimson trees,
Whence the warbling bird all day is heard
On the wings of the perfumed breeze."

(Douglas Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, 97,102) or in *The Voyage of Húi Corra* the "little ever-lovely trees and purple-headed birds a'-chanting music therein" and the speaking bird who was a woman of the land of Erin (W. Y. Evans Wentz, *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, 441), or the description of the lovely lady from the other world in the *Voyage of Bran*,

"An ancient tree there with blossoms
On which birds call the hours;
'Tis in harmony, it is their wont
To call together every hour,"

and other Imrama and literature describing the Earthly Paradise.

The story in *Brendan* is as follows: ³⁶ After leaving the "island that showed signs of motion", the great whale, on which his crew of mystics had celebrated Easter, the mariner saint steered his ship west and came upon the Paradise of Birds, an island peopled with beautiful white birds and humming bees, where sparkling streams full of "jewels of every hue" wound in and out the green. Seeing the crew, the birds began to sing with one voice, "*Salus Deo nostro sedenti super thronum et regni.*" Here it was that Brendan enjoyed the vision that foretold to him the end of his ocean-pilgrimage, the Land of Promise. The crew were weary. Brendan asked them, "Is not God our Pilot and our Shipman?" Almost upon his words, behold there appeared a winged messenger from heaven. Clapping his wings and, "with a sound like a great organ," he conveyed to the intrepid Brendan his message of peace and prophecy. After seven years, "through divers perils, you will find 'The Land of Promise,' which you are seeking and there you will abide forty days; then God will guide your return to the land of your birth". The beauty of the bird is indicated only by the word radiant.

Brendan wondered how such a number of white birds could have been collected in one place, and he prayed that God should give him knowledge. At the end of his prayer, one of the birds left the tree and flew to the ship, "and the motion of his wings was like a little cymbal". When he alighted, the wings expanded for joy. "If thou be God's messenger, tell me whence come those birds and why such a number of them?" "We are of that ruin caused by the old enemy, not by sinning, nor full consent. We suffer no pain, but are separated from the faithful, yet see God. On Sundays and feast days, we take the form of birds—and through Almighty dispensation here we dwell and praise our Creator".

When eventide approached, all the birds clapped their wings and burst forth into song, "*Te dicit hymnus Deus in Syon, et tibi reddetur votum in Jherusalem*", and each hour the modulation of their voices and the flapping of their wings produced a delightful harmony. When the monks sang their nightly vigil,

³⁶ *V S H* 1.113f; 2.276; *B N n E* 2.56, 59.

"Domine labia mea aperies", the birds answered "Laudate Dominum", etc. The same at Vespers, when the birds sang for a full hour. In the morning, "Et sit splendor Domini Dei nostri super nos", they sang as at Matins. At the seventh hour (Sept), "Illuminati Domini vultum suum super nos et misereatur nostri"; at the ninth (None), "Ecce quam bonum et quam jocundum habitares fratris in unum". Thus day and night they sang the praises of God.

When the mariners came to the Paradise of Birds a second time, a bird brought Brendan a bough with grapes as large as wild apples.³⁷ "Erant enim uue illius tam magna sicut poma silvestria. Has uuas diuisit uir Dei fratribus per duodecim dies; et ita reficiebantur ex eis per tot dies."

In "The Wanderings of Columcille's Clerics"³⁸ the crew came to an island where birds with wings of shining silver chanted the hours. The clerics slept because of "the rapturous sweetness of the melody", and the birds let down a beauteous golden leaf from the tree, and it covered them all, "and like to the hide of a full-grown ox was the size of that leaf".

Returning now to the question suggested by Miss Fiske's discussion how angels came to take the form of birds, not winged human forms, but the actual form of birds, is it not conceivable that this belief took its rise in Irish legend, especially through the legend of Brendan? Thronging angels celebrating the birth, death, or other event in the life of a saint are found everywhere in Christian legend, but the representation of such angel throngs as birds like the birds of earth is surely not common and well might be due, where it might be found, to Irish, or more broadly, Celtic influence.

In the retelling of old secular tales by monkish recensionists, Christian additions may cause the bringing of saints into conjunction with fabulous animals. Thus, for example, in the case of birds, in the beautiful and touching story of the *Children of Lir*, the swan-children after their long wanderings are trans-

³⁷ *V S H* 1.126.

³⁸ O'Donnell, *Manus Betha Colaim Chille* 391.

formed by the ringing of the Mass-bell of the oratory on Inish-glory, and are instructed in the Christian faith by a saint named Mochaomhog, thus winning heaven as they die after baptism.³⁹ So also that villainous and gleeful bird, whom we learn to know in the inimitable *Colloquy between Fintan and the Hawk of Achaill* ⁴⁰ is brought into connection with Saint Ciarán of Cluain and his brethren—a most interesting story with a delectable mixture of old myths and clerical interpolations.

³⁹ Wood-Martin: *Elder Faiths* 1.131.

⁴⁰ Hyde, Douglas: tr. in *Legends of Saints and Sinners* 40f; also *ibid.* *The Adventures of Leithin* 43-55; cf. *Anecdota from Irish Ms.* 1.24.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

IN the previous chapters, the references to animals in the *Lives* have been reviewed. Little final comment is necessary. Because of the nature of the material, significant facts were, necessarily, noted in connection with the incidents cited. Many of these were, indeed, already familiar. The main purpose of the study was to assemble the material, with, it is hoped, helpful additions and comment, to present it classified for comparison, and to give citations in as complete form as possible, so as to afford a convenient summary of the subject, show how it illustrates the life of the early saints in a variety of relations, and incidentally prove how full of interest the *Lives* are to the student of literature.

Owing to various considerations, one point of exceptional interest suggested itself in the course of the study, work upon which is advanced but not completed and must, therefore, be left to a later opportunity. Proceeding from the general evidence of the saints' love for, and sympathy with, animals, and further, the love of Nature their lives display both in her gentler and wilder aspects—especially in connection with the motives attracting them to the anchorite life from about the year 600—the conclusion became apparent that a customary practice existed from earliest times, and early became a tradition, of making friends with wild animals, whether in the neighborhood of the monastery, or when in temporary or prolonged seclusion in wild places.

Space cannot be taken here to present the special evidence illustrating the saints' love of Nature, a subject full of interest in relations beyond the obvious fact; but it is at least possible, very briefly to set forth four items of proof in regard to the intercourse and intimacy of saints with wild animals. The point

to be proved is that, from the earliest times, this intercourse became an accepted thing, a thing expected, is assumed to be characteristic of those sojourning in their chosen retreats, is mythicized, and may even be made a subject of reprobation and a censure that called back the solitary from the wilds to proper monastic discipline.

Many of the stories in the *Lives*—a number given above—tell of the friendly relationship of particular saints with wild animals. Often the pleasantness of the places chosen by a saint for his hermitage is spoken of, and it is added that birds sang most delightfully and the wild animals of the forest came there to him “et aquam de manibus eius domesticæ bibebant” as in the life of Saint Coemgen of Glendalough.¹ This indicates the possibility of a tradition. Assuming for a moment that such a tradition may have possibly existed, might it not be late? Might it not have a slender foundation in the earlier lives, or in oral tradition, and have been expanded in the lives we have from what was originally of little substance? To this, the following piece of evidence gives denial. In the *Life of Columbanus* by Jonas (c. 639), the only life remaining written within a few years of the death of the subject and on information derived orally from contemporaries, we read as follows: “And do not wonder that the birds and beasts obeyed the command of the man of God. For we have learned from Chamnoald, royal chaplain at Laon, who was his attendant and disciple, that he had often seen Columban wandering about in the wilderness fasting and praying and calling the wild beasts and birds. These came immediately at his command, and he stroked them with his hand. The beasts and the birds joyfully played, frisking about him just as cats about their mistresses. Chamnoald said he had often seen him call the little animal, which men commonly name a *squiruis*, from the tops of high trees and take it in his hand and put it on his neck and let it go into and come out from his bosom.”²

¹ *VSH* 1.242.

² Migne, P. L. 87, “Life of Columbanus,” *Translations and Reprints*, 2 No. 7 18.

We have in this passage certainly in the first place assurance of a starting-point of tradition six hundred years before Saint Francis, nor, indeed, need we doubt that behind the record of Jonas and the testimony of Chamnoald, we may accept as a fact that Columbanus possessed the power and enjoyed its exercise of making friends with wild creatures near the monastery or in the retreats to which he retired in the wilds. And the passage may serve also to give validity to similar stories told of the early saints contemporary with him and their successors.

The next piece of evidence has all the greater worth because it is not concerned with an actual exercise of this power to attract and make friends with animals. In censuring the anchoritic life, the speaker, while refusing the invitation proffered him, takes for granted such friendly intercourse as an habitual thing. The nature of the account, it will be noted, is such that one can hardly doubt that it is a reliable account of an incident that actually happened. The rebuke was administered by Saint Mochta to Saint Cronán, in refusing, while travelling, to be Saint Cronán's guest. "Exinde autem ad locum, in quo nunc est ciuitas sancti Cronani, Ross Cre; et pernoctauit ibi sine hospicio, quamuis a sancto Cronano invitatus est. Ipse enim cenam sancto Mochudo preparauit. Set sanctus Mochuda noluit ad illum exire, dicens: 'Ad virum qui hospites euitauit et in gronna deserti cellam suam edificauit, de uia plana non ibo, *set bestias heremi habeat sibi hospites.*' Hec uerba audiens sanctus Cronanus, uenit ad sanctum Carthagum, et per iussionem eius sanctus Cronanus cellam iuxta gronnam deseruit."³

Far the most noteworthy of such legends is the often cited, often retold, story of Ciarán's beast-monastery, which Plummer⁴ justly calls "one of the most delightful things in hagiographical literature", reading, at it does, "like a page from a medieval 'Jungle Book'." The story in its most complete form runs as follows: "Cum illuc sanctus Kyaranus peruenisset, primitus sedebat ibi sub quadam arbore, sub cuius vmbra aper ferocissimus fuit. Videns aper primo hominem, perterritus fugit, et

³ *V S H* 1.194.

⁴ *V S H* 1.liv, cxli.

iterum mitis factus a Deo, reuersus est quasi famulus ad virum Dei; et ille aper primus discipulus quasi monachus sancti Kyarani illo loco fuit. Ipse enim aper statim in conspectu viri Dei virgas et fenum ad materiam cellule construende dentibus suis fortiter abscidit. Nemo enim cum sancto Dei adhuc ibi erat; quia solus a discipulis suis ad illum heremum euasit. Deinde alia animalia de cubilibus heremi ad sanctum Kyaranum uenerunt, id est vvlpis, et broccus, et lupo, et cerua; et manserunt mitissima apud eum. Obediebant enim secundum iussionem sancti viri in omnibus quasi monachi.

“Alia quoque die vvlpis, qui erat callidior et dolosior ceteris animalibus, fycones abbatis sui, sancti id est Kyarani, furatus est, et deserens propositum suum, duxit ad pristinum habitaculum suum in heremo, uolens illas ibi commedere. Hoc sciens sanctus pater Kyaranus alium monachum uel discipulum, id est broccum, post vvlpem in heremum misit, ut fratrem ad locum suum reduceret. Broccus autem, cum esset peritus in siluis, ad uerbum senioris sui ilico obediens perrexit, et recto itinere ad speluncam fratris vvlpis peruenit. Et inueniens eum uolentem ficones domini sui commedere, duas aures eius et caudam abscidit, et pilos eius carpsit, et coegit eum secum uenire ad monasterium suum, ut ageret ibi penitentiam pro furto suo. Et vvlpis necessitate compulsus, simul et broccus cum sanis ficonibus hora nona ad cellam suam ad sanctum Kyaranum uenerunt. Et ait uir sanctus ad vvlpem: ‘Quare hos malum fecisti, frater, quod non decet monachos agere? Ecce aqua nostra dulcis est et communis, et cibus similiter communiter omnibus partitur. Etsi uoluisses commedere ‘carnem’ pro natura, Deus omnipotens de corticibus arborum pro nobis tibi fecisset.’ Tunc vvlpis, petens indulgenciam, ieiunando egit penitentiam, et non commedit donec sibi a sancto viro iussum est. Deinde familiaris cum ceteris mansit.

“Postea sui discipuli et alii plures ad sanctum Kyaranum in ipso loco conuenerunt vndique; et ibi inceptum est clarum monasterium. Set predicta animalia domestica in vita sua ibi erant, quia sanctus senior libenter. . .”⁵

⁵ *VSH* 1.219f; cf. *BNnE*, 2.100.

The story when retold seems like a playful apologue, devised with conscious literary intention. In point of fact, it is nothing of the sort. It runs back in various recensions to an early life written by a monk of Ciarán's community, and through that to oral tradition of an indefinite antiquity. It is possible that Ciarán of Saighir was a 5th century saint. The story is a singularly perfect example of monastic folk-lore produced within monastic tradition under precisely the same conditions as folk-myth outside the monastery cloister. What may have been its starting-point, it is difficult to say. It is certainly not an allegory, as has been suggested; it is barely possible but improbable that brothers in Ciarán's company bearing beast-names were mythicized, and one most certainly hesitates to assume with Plummer that heathen myths of an Apollo-like patron of animals become identified with Ciarán as well as the attributes of a solar and fire deity or hero, which Plummer also ascribes to him.⁶ The simplest explanation would be the familiar folk-lore motive of the helpful beast building upon Ciarán's actual association with wild animals in his hermitage. Whatever the origin, the story, necessarily of considerable antiquity, is admirable evidence of companionship and intimacy between saints and wild animals, such that, as it passed down in oral tradition, the animals became humanized, carrying on human relations miraculously with the saint, their superior and friend.

We may next consider still another piece of evidence, one that attests the clear recognition of the tradition of the love of saints for birds and beasts, and their solicitude that they might live their lives unharmed. We have seen above that Saint Colmán's ducks dwelt in sanctuary in the pool near the church, and that this protection seems extended even to a distance where Saint Colmán's cult was known. So in later tradition it could be seen that the hares were under Saint Monacella's special protection. How astonishing to us who think of certain things as wholly new and as due to an enlightened modern sensibility, to read this caption in Giraldus' 12th century description of Ireland,⁷ "*De mirandis sanctorum refugiis,*" and to find that his

⁶ *V S H* 1.liv.

⁷ *Works*, ed. Dimock 5.124f.

chapter treats of 'sanctuaries', not primarily for men alone, but for birds and beasts, in honor of the patron saints, Saint Beanus and Saint Brendan. The text reads as follows: "In ulteriori Ultoniae parte sunt montana quaedam, in quibus grues et grutae, avesque variae, suo in tempore abunde nidificant, propter refugium et pacem non tantum hominibus, verum etiam pecoribus et avibus ab incolis ibidem exhibitam, ob reverentiam scilicet sancti Beani, cujus ecclesia locum illustrat. Sanctus iste miro et inaudito more non tantum aves, sed et avium suarum ova tuetur. Si enim ut ova rapias manum admoveas, videas protinus pullos marcidos et rubros, et tanquam eadem hora jam exclusos. Sin autem manum retrahas cum voluntate, videas iterum seu miraculose seu phantastice contra naturae cursum, pullos in ova vel conversos vel reversos.

"Accedant duo, inspector simul et raptor; hic pullos, ille ova videbit.

"In australi Momonia, inter collem Brendani et mare spatiosum quod Hispaniam interluit et Hiberniam, est locus quidam non modicus uno ex latere fluvio piscoso, altero vero rivulo quodam inclusus: qui, ob reverentiam sancti Brendani, aliorumque loci illius sanctorum, non tantum hominibus et pecoribus, verum etiam ipsis feris, tam advenis quam indigenis, refugium praestat inauditum. Unde tam cervi, quam apri et lepores, aliaeque ferae, cum canes e vestigio sequentes nullatenus effugere se posse praesentiunt, a partibus procul inde remotis ad locum istum quantocius transferuntur. Qui ut rivulum pertransierint, canibus ibidem cursum sistentibus, nec ulterius insequentibus, ab omni statim periculo tuti sunt.

"Mira Dei virtus, quod sanctorum meritis nec natura vorax, nec venator instigans et praeda praecurrens, praedones impios et pertinaces promptam transvehunt ad rapinam.

"In duobus refugiis istis, ex longo pacis usu quasi domesticae hominum frequentiam aves et ferae non refugiant.

"Ex altero loci praedicti latere fluvius illabitur piscosissimus et praecipue salmonibus ad miraculum usque fecundissimus.

"Hospitalitatis namque gratia, quam sancti, ibidem viri pro viribus, immo longe supra vires, in peregrinos et advenas in-

fatigante exercere solebant, ad caritatis explendae tam sufficientiam quam experientiam, piscium indulta est copia tanta. Et ne avaritiae stimulis, ut assolet, ad emolumentum mercimoniale cupidos mortalium animos ipsa provocaret abundantia, ad mannae modum remedium est divinitus indultum, et nunquam ultra primam capturae noctem pisces utiliter reserventur. Quantumlibet enim sale conditi, putredini tamen semper obnoxii, insipidi permanent et insulsi: nec arte quantalibet in crastinum reservati, vel ad usum provenient vel ad esum."

This is but a part of the evidence that might be offered, but even this must be held to be conclusive. And the fact that the beautiful stories associated with Saint Francis in the 13th century plainly belong to, are definitely motivated by, a tradition running far back—here in the case of the Irish saints to the 7th century—is surely not so much a matter of general understanding, that it is not worth while to set the matter forth. To the writer at least it seems worth while—so much so that an opportunity is anticipated to enlarge the study of this tradition as it appears among the saints of other countries. That it was to a special degree characteristic of the early saints of Ireland cannot be asserted—but certainly no where else, judging from her present studies, is it more fully illustrated.

In conclusion, one statement may be ventured. While fairly adequate in a special field, the theme of this study is still far from fully exemplifying the widely varied interest of the *Lives*. The writer, so far as her limited reading in the hagiographies of Western Europe enables her to judge, believes that while in the legends of the early saints of the Church all have in common much of beauty, charm, tenderness, many examples of the workings of the folk-mind in fantastic fable, none, certainly can excel those of Ireland in freshness, quaintness, imaginative power, implicit wit, and beautiful or grotesque fantasy.

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